THE LEADING BUSINESS MAGAZINE FOR CONTRACTORS

CONSTRUCTIONBUSINESSOWNER.COM

CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS OWNER

JULY/AUGUST 2026



CREATING A CULTURE OF SAFETY

EMPOWERING YOUR CREW AT EVERY LEVEL

IN THE OFFICE
4 trends shaping growth in engineering & construction

IN THE FIELD
Your handbook to effective truck loading



STAND UP TO YOUR MONSTER TO-DO LIST? ☑ SAVE MONEY? ☑

Small business owners' to-do lists can add up. So see if you can save money on a commercial auto quote at **ProgressiveCommercial.com.**

PROGRESSIVE® COMMERCIAL

Get a quote online in as little as 8 minutes

Progressive Casualty Insurance Co. & affiliates.

United Rentals®
Customer Equipment Solutions

YOUR EQUIPMENT, TREATED LIKE OUR OWN

The owned equipment on your worksite should be in top operating condition. Our Customer Equipment Solutions team specializes in field and on-site equipment repair and service, so you can protect your investment, safeguard your employees and meet ANSI, OSHA, and CSA requirements.

From on-demand service for unexpected equipment repair to a turnkey fleet management solution, United Rentals' Customer Equipment Solutions team offers an option tailored to your unique needs.

Call 800.UR.RENTS or visit UnitedRentals.com/CES



FROM THE EDITOR

CARMEN CAPOCCIA



Senior Managing Editor
Carmen Capoccia

As I write this letter, thermometers are creeping into the 90s in my region, and it will only get warmer from here. As your crews undertake projects in the summer sun, it's imperative to take measures to protect them from heat exposure. Provide access to water and shade, and allow rest breaks during high-temperature days. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration recommends hourly breaks when the temperature exceeds 77 degrees. And it starts at 70 degrees for unacclimatized workers, i.e., workers who have been doing the job for less than two weeks.

Make sure your crews know the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke, and take immediate action if any employee is in distress. The Centers for Disease Control lists the following symptoms:

HEAT EXHAUSTION

- Headache
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Irritability
- Thirst
- Heavy sweating
- Elevated body temperature

HEAT STROKE

- Confusion and/or slurred speech
- Loss of consciousness
- Hot, dry skin or profuse sweating
- Seizures
- Very high body temperature

Seek immediate medical attention for anyone who shows signs of heat stroke. It may be fatal if unaddressed. You can find more information on heat hazards and prevention at cdc.gov and osha.gov.

In addition to heat-related illness, summer may also bring severe storms, and August usually kicks off the "peak" months of hurricane season. The impact of a significant weather event can damage jobsites and throw a timeline into disarray. Preparation can help. Making contingency plans for before, during and after a storm may go a long way in protecting your people and your projects as much as possible. You can find severe weather tips, from preparation to aftermath, at constructionbusinessowner.com.

One of the best ways to mitigate injuries and fatalities on the jobsite is through a strong safety culture. Starting without feature series on page 22, learn how to develop and strengthen your business's safety programs.

Wishing you a safe (and cool) summer,

Carmen Capoccia

CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS OWNER

EDITORIAL
Editor-in-Chief
Megan Beam
mbeam@cahabamedia.com · 205-314-8264
Senior Managing Editor
Carmen Capoccia
ccapoccia@cahabamedia.com · 205-961-3391

CREATIVE SERVICES
Art Director
Andi Shepard
Digital Production Designer
Matt Hodges
Web Developer
Greg Caudle

PRODUCTION
Client Services Coordinator
Sonya Crocker
scrocker@cahabamedia.com

CIRCULATION
Subscription Management
constructionbusinessowner@omeda.com
800-256-2785

ADVERTISING
Senior Account Executive
Van Imbragulio
vimbragulio@cahabamedia.com · 205-314-8263
Account Executive
Jonathan Noble
jnoble@cahabamedia.com · 205-314-8268

CAHABA MEDIA GROUP

Publisher
Matthew G. Conroy
VP of Finance
Brandon Whittemore
Director of Content
Elizabeth Manning
Director of Operations
Laurie Tisdale
Director of Sales
Stacy Marshall

P.O. Box 530067, Birmingham, AL 35253

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Dr. Scott Arias
Professor – Eastern Kentucky University
CEO/Chairman of the Board - ACE Consulting Company

Cal Beyer
Senior Director of SAFE Workplaces - SAFE Projects

Peter Hilger, AIA
Faculty Director, Curriculum and Internship Adviser, FM Program Coordinator Construction and Facility Management Program - University of Minnesota

John Meibers
Vice President and General Manager- Deltek ComputerEase

Joseph Natarelli, CPA
National Construction Services Leader - CBIZ

Gregg M. Schoppman
Partner - FMI Corporation

Construction Business Owner (ISSN 1551-3246) is published by Cahaba Media Group, PO Box 530067, Birmingham, AL 35253. Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, AL and additional mailing offices. Subscriptions: Free of charge to qualified construction business owners. Publisher reserves the right to determine qualifications. Annual subscriptions: U.S. and possessions $48, all other countries $125 U.S. funds (via air mail). Single copies: U.S. and possessions $5, all other countries $15 U.S. funds (via air mail). Call 800-256-2785 inside or outside the U.S. Postmaster: Send changes of address and form 3579 to Construction Business Owner, PO Box 271, Lincolnshire, IL 60069-9835.

©2026 Cahaba Media Group, Inc. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the written consent of the publisher. The publisher does not warrant, either expressly or by implication, the factual accuracy of any advertisements, articles or description herein, nor does the publisher warrant the validity of any views or opinions offered by the authors of said articles, descriptions or any advertisements. Submissions: We welcome submissions. Unless otherwise negotiated in writing, by the editors, by sending us your submission, you grant Cahaba Media Group, Inc. permission by an irrevocable license to edit, reproduce, distribute, publish and adapt your submission in any medium on multiple occasions. You are free to publish your submission yourself or to allow others to republish your submission. Submissions will not be returned.

VOLUME 23 ISSUE 6


38

IN EVERY ISSUE

2 From the Editor

4 News

44 Products

48 Stats

THE BUSINESS COUNCIL


6

6 Gregg M. Schoppman
The dirty secrets of job cost forecasting

8 Cal Beyer
US Erectors: Connecting more than steel

10 CBIZ
A contractor's midyear report card

IN THE OFFICE

12 Research & Report
4 trends shaping growth in engineering & construction

14 Risk Management
How to turn third-party insurance compliance into a better business process

18 Training & Education
Elevating the trades: Strategies to address the skilled labor shortage


18

IN THE FIELD

32 Equipment Matters
Your manual to effective truck loading

34 Sustainability
Sustainable materials are a smart business strategy, not just an environmental obligation

38 Tech Support
Driving efficiency with rugged computing technology

42 Infrastructure
Transit-oriented development projects continue to reshape American cities

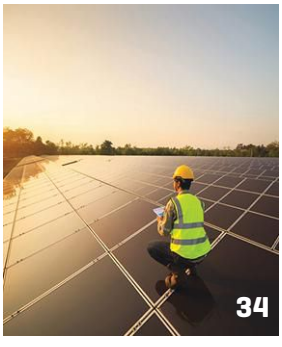

34

Photo Credits: Panasonic Connect North America, JLG , Adobe Stock

FEATURE SERIES


26

SAFETY

22 Creating a Culture of Safety in Today's Construction Workforce

24 Improving Safety in Construction Requires Greater Focus on Temporary Workers

26 Safety Starts With What's Under the Hard Hat

28 Safety's Siren Song

ON THE COVER



Photo Credit: adobestock.com

ACQUISITIONS

Autodesk to Acquire MaintainX

Autodesk Inc. has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire MaintainX, a modern maintenance and operations solution, in an all-cash transaction valued at approximately $3.6 billion. The proposed acquisition of MaintainX is intended to strengthen Autodesk's ability to connect operations workflows with the broader life cycle, helping teams make faster, more informed decisions over time. MaintainX's prebuilt integrations and scalable go-to-market growth motion in operations offers strong expansion potential across customer segments, geographies and adjacent use cases. Its central position in day-to-day maintenance and operational activity gives Autodesk access to data on asset history, inspections, maintenance patterns and real-world performance. Visit autodesk.com and getmaintainx.com.

DEUTZ Acquires G & T Truck Repair

DEUTZ Corporation expanded its North American service network through the acquisition of G & T Truck Repair, a full-service commercial truck, cargo tanker and equipment repair provider servicing Northern California and western Nevada. The transaction closed June 1. Under the agreement, DEUTZ Corporation will continue to operate the G & T Truck Repair brand from its current location, maintaining the company's reputation for inspections, diagnostics, maintenance and repair services supporting commercial trucks, cargo tank motor vehicles, aerial, hydraulic and light equipment. By combining G&T Truck Repairs' established customer relationships and technical expertise with the broader DEUTZ service organization, DEUTZ is strengthening its ability to deliver comprehensive maintenance, diagnostics, repair and field service solutions across the western U.S. Visit deutzamericas.com and gandttruckrepair.com.

NEW HIRES



Katlyn Garcia

Lawrence Group

Lawrence Group announced the return of Katlyn Garcia as the firm's new controller. Garcia rejoined Lawrence Group after previously serving in the firm's accounting department for nearly a decade. She originally joined Lawrence Group in 2014 as an accounting services coordinator and was promoted to accounting services manager in 2023 before departing to pursue new leadership opportunities in accounting and finance. In her role as controller, Garcia will support Lawrence Group's accounting operations, financial reporting, compliance efforts and overall financial management strategy, helping drive the firm's growth. Founded in 1983, Lawrence Group is an integrated planning and design firm headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, with professional staff in Texas, Florida and New York. Visit thelawrencegroup.com.



Steve Toprani

Cohen Seglias

Cohen Seglias announced the addition of senior counsel Steve Toprani to the firm's construction group in Pittsburgh. Toprani focuses his practice on construction law and commercial litigation, drawing on his background as a former C-suite executive and prosecutor to advise organizations on risk, compliance and governance. He regularly assists clients and leadership teams with identifying vulnerabilities, conducting internal investigations, addressing regulatory and operational gaps and developing strategies that reduce liability and strengthen organizational resilience. Prior to joining Cohen Seglias, Toprani served as chief legal officer for a mechanical construction company serving the mid-Atlantic region. Visit cohenseglias.com.



Chris Rycroft

Elliot Equipment Company

Chris Rycroft joined Elliott Equipment Company's sales leadership team. Rycroft, who serves as the director of sales for mechanic and lube truck products at Stellar Industries, will carry dual titles as he adds all Elliott product lines and the full Elliott sales team to his portfolio. With over 40 years of experience in sales, Rycroft brings industry knowledge and market strategy to the Elliott team. As director of sales, he will be responsible for market growth across all product lines and share insight from the field to Elliott's product team. With his teams spanning the U.S., his role creates stronger alignment across both organizations, enabling greater collaboration between sales leadership, faster sharing of market insights and a more connected experience for customers. Visit elliottequip.com.



Emily Videtto

Pella Corporation

Pella Corporation announced Emily Videtto as its next president and CEO effective July 1. Videtto assumes the CEO duties held by Tim Yaggi upon his planned retirement in July. Videtto brings nearly a decade of progressive strategic leadership and success at Pella, most recently serving as president and chief operating officer (COO). She played a pivotal role in revitalizing the brand, driving innovation, delivering quality and reliable delivery, and amassing a differentiated portfolio of brands. Her leadership as chief marketing officer and later as COO was marked by product launches and expanded distribution channels. Pella Corporation designs and manufactures windows and doors for residential homes and commercial applications. Visit pella.com.

INDUSTRY UPDATES

Trimble Collaborates With National SkillsUSA

Trimble announced a collaboration with SkillsUSA to provide technology and training to career and technical education students across the U.S. By integrating advanced modeling and geospatial tools into classrooms, trade training programs, and state and national competitions, the collaboration aims to help prepare a workforce capable of meeting the demand for construction professionals. Through this initiative, Trimble provides SkillsUSA advisors and instructors with an overview of Trimble tech and multiple options to gain access for its use in the classroom. Student members can also make requests to use Trimble technology for local, state and national competitions. Additionally, Trimble will donate software subscriptions that will allow students to gain hands-on experience with the same technology used on modern jobsites. Trimble will also sponsor the National Leadership & Skills Conference, supporting competitions in drafting, drone technology and heavy equipment operation. These programs help transition students from the classroom to high-demand careers by fostering digital fluency early in their professional development. Visit trimble.com/en/education.

Richard F. Vitarelli Appointed Chair of AGC Labor & Employment Law Council

Nationwide employment law firm Jackson Lewis P.C. announced that Principal Richard F. Vitarelli has been appointed chair of the AGC Labor and Employment Law Council, serving a term from May 1 to April 30, 2027. The council is comprised of attorneys who regularly represent chapters or contractor members of the Associated General Contractors of America in labor and employment matters. Vitarelli co-leads both the labor relations and transactional services groups, is a member of the construction group and serves on the firm's board of directors. With more than three decades of experience, he represents employers in strategic labor relations and collective bargaining matters across industries, with a strong focus on the construction and infrastructure sectors. Founded in 1983, the council advances information sharing and education that help contractors navigate complex labor and employment issues with business-focused guidance from industry advisors. Visit jacksonlewis.com.

Superior Construction Invests in New Training Facility

Superior Construction, a family-owned infrastructure contractor, is investing in a new 13,000-square-foot training facility at its Jacksonville, Florida, headquarters. The company expects to break ground in 2026 on the dedicated two-story building that will serve as a hub for employee training, apprenticeship development and hands-on learning opportunities that support Superior's continued growth and evolving workforce needs. The new facility will feature classroom space, hands-on training areas, heavy equipment simulators, meeting and conference space and a gym. Training opportunities will include apprenticeship instruction in carpentry, pipelaying and heavy equipment operation, along with certification programs. The facility will also support intern development, employee training initiatives and companywide learning events. The facility was designed by Kasper Architects + Associates and will be constructed by Stellar Group. Visit superiorconstruction.com.

Balfour Beatty Hits Demolition Milestone at Brooklyn & Church Site

Balfour Beatty celebrated the completion of demolition activities at the Brooklyn & Church project during a milestone event held at the project site. City officials and community stakeholders joined the project team to recognize the achievement and highlight the role of adaptive reuse projects in supporting sustainable growth and long-term investment in Charlotte, North Carolina. To complete this phase of construction, project teammates reduced the existing building by 250,000 square feet through detailed structural demolition, creating an open plaza and opening tower floors for future residential units. Demolition work also involved the removal of 1,800 pieces of precast from the building's exterior, as well as the careful removal of building sections located over or immediately adjacent to public sidewalks. Prior to demolition, the team executed extensive preconstruction and early site work activities as well as led a large-scale material diversion effort, redirecting more than 576 tons of furniture and equipment from landfills. Through partnerships with local nonprofit organizations, more than 142,000 pounds of furniture and kitchen equipment were donated for reuse across the Carolinas, extending the life of materials originally housed within the building. Visit balfourbeattyus.com.

Need More News?
constructionbusinessowner.com/news

Prestidigitation, or the Art of Construction Project Labor Forecasting

An examination of the dirty secrets of job cost forecasting



GREGG M. SCHOPPMAN is a partner with FMI Corporation, management consultants and investment bankers for the construction industry. Schoppman specializes in the areas of productivity and project management. He also leads FMI's project management consulting practice. Prior to joining FMI, Schoppman served as a senior project manager for a general contracting firm in central Florida. He has completed complex construction projects in the medical, pharmaceutical, office, heavy civil, industrial, manufacturing and multifamily markets. He holds a bachelor's degree and master's degree in civil engineering, as well as a Master of Business Administration. Schoppman has expertise in numerous contract delivery methods, as well as knowledge of many geographical markets. Contact Schoppman by email at gregg.schoppman@fmicorp.com. Visit fmicorp.com.

Sandbagging.

It's interesting how a simple, throwaway word has become a universal descriptor for the way many construction organizations view job cost forecasting. In fact, you can go to a foreign country and hear construction vernacular that appears to be mainstream. (I'm talking to my Canadian friends here — punch lists and deficiency lists are the same thing.) But if you use the phrase "sandbagging," there will be a mild shoulder shrug, a sigh and an uncomfortable silence. For instance, how does a line item on a labor budget repeatedly get hours charged to it, only to have zero progress? Furthermore, how does a project demonstrate 10-11 months of "on-budget" reporting, only to see the entire profitability crumble like a house of cards in the final month? That must be one heck of a punch list, err, deficiency list.

For all of the advancements in job cost reporting software, there still remains a wild card: the human element. Project managers, field managers, job cost accountants and chief financial officers have wrestled over accurate job cost reporting for millennia. I am sure there is still labor code for foundation walls on the great pyramids of Egypt that is showing at 99%. This may sound like a flippant response to serious problems; make no mistake that the inaccuracies of job cost reporting throughout the construction industry are worrisome in that they destroy profitability, erode trust in organizations and partners and, ultimately, have the ability to bankrupt construction businesses.

Consider these rules when conducting routine spot checks of your job cost system or, more importantly, the reporting process — which serves as one of the most important "pulse checks" of your business.

Rule 1: The Ocean vs. the Teaspoon vs. Goldilocks

Overcompensating is a common phenomenon in the industry. If people aren't reporting to the right units, let's make one labor unit and call it LABOR.

"But we lack granularity and can't demonstrate progress." Fine, we'll go the other direction and have 10,000 labor codes. As the pendulum swings, so does our ability to create realism in reporting. The "Goldilocks" number of codes will vary, but a labor budget should ultimately built in the same way the field will build the project.

Rule 2: Budget Creation in a Vacuum

If you have ever heard, "Well, I could've told you there weren't enough hours in that labor budget," you probably did not have enough field input in the budget creation. Simply dumping the estimate into your job cost management system is a surefire way to create more distance between the office and the field.

Rule 3: Use the Right Currency

Consider this statement: You have $101,456 in the budget for labor for the 16 columns you are building. "Sure, I can do some reverse calculus, estimate what I think a crew of five makes on an hourly basis, subtract our labor burden, carry the one … "

For anyone squeamish about the field seeing dollars, it is probably high time to realize that the currency of the field is hours and units of production. Telling the field they have 1,500 hours to form 16 columns is not only realistic but also hedges against that nagging fear that your job cost reports are landing in the office of your competition.

Rule 4: Reports That Don't Use Dot-Matrix Printers

Sure, this rule is a reference to a throwback age when printers spit out pages of green-bar reports with those fancy spool circles. (Point of consideration — should we be worried that airlines still use these same printers?) Be less concerned about the printer and more concerned about the 25 columns of data (married to the 10,000 labor codes) with such terms as "variance."

Here comes the rub — some reports show the variance as a positive number (which is bad), and some show it as a negative number (which is good, like golf). And then we tell the field, negative is good here, but not on profit. Our field leaders are smart, but sometimes, we let our systems create inept reports that cause more frustration than the paper they are printed on.

Rule 5: Rules of Engagement

How can two identical jobs, with two identical sets of labor codes, with two different field leaders at the exact same stage, have completely different forecasts? One could be using special rose-colored glasses when reporting their progress.

For instance, without clear "Claiming the Unit" rules, one field leader could say they are 99% complete, while another takes a more conservative approach. This isn't about who is right, but about what is consistently reported upon. Firms should have rules that establish when a unit is claimed on a cost report.

Rule 6: Consistent Reviews

The litany of job cost management systems in the market have allowed for greater transparency of job cost progress and real-time reporting. Now, think how you would answer this question: "When was the last time the field leader reviewed the labor budget?" They have access to the system, so we think they are feverishly reviewing the budget weekly — only to find out they don't even know their password to the system.

Look, I have a scale in my bathroom that I walk by every day, ignorantly blissful about not knowing where I measure out. There has to be an internal system to the organization that brings project teams together to review each line item on a routine basis to generate conversation.

Rule 7: The Blame Game

Transparency sounds great until the first argument spawns.

"You never hit the budget!"

"Well, you never put in the right number of hours to do the work!"

"You don't work hard enough in the field!"

"Guess what, I'll put my hours WHEREVER you want me to put them."

Sounds a little like a domestic argument, but this plays out often on projects. Rather than digging into root causes — weather, permitting, unforeseen conditions, etc. — it quickly becomes personal, and the reporting process leads to a dereliction of duty on all sides. First, it is called *estimating*, not *accurating*. Second, the field has one of the most challenging jobs, and complicating that job with insults and insecurity will go nowhere.

Rule 8: Sandbagging

You didn't think I forgot, did you? Project managers have engaged in this time-honored tradition to protect a "honeypot" of money that they think is their money. They may use it for hiding hiccups on projects, making problems

Photo Credit: Nadhifatul- adobestock.com



with customers go away or using portions in horse trading. The challenge is finding the right balance — that "freebie" for a customer can also become a sticky conversation with a customer that should probably be a change order, but it is much easier to become an illusionist and make it go away.

How many dollars are lost annually because managers fail to manage? Now multiply this by the number of managers you have internally to determine the variability you might experience across your work-in-progress report monthly.

These rules are hardly complicated, but the games/tricks being played began as innocent hacks to manage the lifeblood of the firm — the labor budget. However, the greatest firms have measures in place to create job cost integrity, establish realism in the budget and provide forecasts that allow for action to take place.

"The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist." Verbal Kint (or Keyser Söze?) of "The Usual Suspects" may have been a project manager and he just didn't know it.

Beyond the Girders

Connecting more than steel



CAL BEYER, CWP, is senior director of SAFE Workplaces for SAFE Project. Beyer is a longtime national advocate for workplace mental health, substance misuse, suicide prevention, and opioid risk reduction and overdose prevention. This grew out of his work on human capital risk management and worker well-being. SAFE Project is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit committed to overcoming the addiction epidemic in the U.S. Established in 2017 by Admiral James and Mary Winnefeld after the tragic loss of their 19-year-old son Jonathan due to an opioid overdose, SAFE Project aims to save lives impacted by substance use and mental health challenges through overdose prevention and response, education on stigma, and development of prevention and recovery programs. SAFE Project also provides tailored guidance and programming for workplaces and organizations; within college and university campuses; for veterans, service members and their families; and within communities. Since 2016, Beyer has served as a member of the editorial advisory board for Construction Business Owner. Reach Beyer at cal@safeproject.us or 651-307-7883. Visit safeproject.us.

US Erectors was founded in 2004 in Pleasant Hill, a suburb of Des Moines, Iowa, but the idea didn't start on a jobsite. At the time, CEO Brad Churchill was working for another steel erector in the Des Moines market, building someone else's vision while quietly starting to question what he wanted his own to look like. That answer began to take shape in an unexpected place.

During a class at his church, Churchill found himself thinking differently about what was possible. "Through prayer," he said, "I knew I wanted to own the company that would build the next phase of our church." That was the starting moment of what became US Erectors.

Today, the workforce of US Erectors ranges between 75-125 ironworkers and operating engineers. The company's workload is concentrated in data centers, warehousing and schools, and the majority of their work is with repeat clients and joint ventures with general contractors. Churchill notes that building and working with churches is "definitely my passion."

Churchill is proud of the culture he has built. As he puts it, "We put our team members first." He believes that no person is more or less important than another.

"It takes a combination of leadership, estimating, project management, supervision, craft workers and office staff to make a project successful," he said. "If one of those areas is lagging, it affects the others. If everyone knows their importance and does their job correctly, the entire team wins."

As a union employer, the company provides a defined benefits package but goes beyond it in many ways, offering "vacation pay, paid holidays, clothing and boot allowances, and a bonus program that includes everyone who draws a paycheck."

Churchill has always advocated for the physical aspect of safety and the compliance tasks, and he believed in getting workers home safely at the end of the shift. But when he and his family experienced the unthinkable, it made the softer side of safety — the human aspects — even more crucial to him.

Churchill's leadership and advocacy around mental health did not develop in isolation. It was shaped by a loss that fundamentally changed how he sees his role as both a leader and a father. In May 2017, Churchill and his family lost his 16-year-old son, Trevor, to suicide. In the years that followed, Churchill has spoken openly about how that loss forced him to confront conversations that are often avoided — both at home and on the jobsite — and ultimately reshaped the way he connects with the people around him.

Churchill shared how their faith and support from pastors and friends got him, his wife, Tammy, and their now-grown daughters, Madie and Ellie, through the hard times after Trevor's passing. The Churchills recognized that the peer support they received from their church community was at the core of their healing. He said this inspired the need to build tighter connections with his crew members to help prevent any other family experiencing a loss like theirs.

Churchill became very intentional in

Photo Credit: Brad Churchill



Churchill family: (Back row) Trevor, Madie, Brad, Tammy (Front) Ellie

developing closer personal relationships with his employees. He took time to better understand what was going on in their personal lives that could explain changes in attitude, lack of energy or motivation, or other behavioral changes being observed on worksites. He became more direct in reaching out in private conversations with individuals, and he grew more comfortable offering relational, emotional and financial support. His open-door policy became a revolving door because the more he cared, the more they shared with him.

These experiences led Churchill to become more involved in leadership with his local Ironworkers union and as a trustee for the Health & Welfare Fund. Churchill was instrumental in instituting an expanded employee assistance program for the members and their dependent family members. As a trustee, he took time to attend learning opportunities sponsored by the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans.

Churchill took on the task of improving the education provided for all union members in his local union. He educated all employees so they knew how to share health plan information with their spouses and dependent children.

Churchill has been an influential leader helping the Ironworkers International Union and the Ironworkers Management Progressive Action Cooperative Trust (IMPACT) address workplace mental health and suicide prevention. In 2020, Churchill informed the ironworkers joint labor management committee that he'd be willing to share his family's story as a way of helping bring attention to the construction industry's high rate of suicide.

US Erectors' commitment to building a strong people-first culture aligns with the work of SAFE Project (Stop the Addiction Fatality Epidemic), a national nonprofit focused on preventing overdose and supporting mental health and recovery in workplaces and communities. SAFE Project partners with employers to help create environments where safety extends beyond the jobsite and into the well-being of the people who make the work possible.

US Erectors adopted policies, procedures and practices to promote prevention and recovery from mental health and substance use challenges. Notable examples include the following:

- Signed the SAFE Project #NoShame Pledge
- Presented toolbox talks on substance use prevention focused not on punitive consequences but on the availability of help and resources
- Shared information about 12-step and non-12-step recovery programs
- Approved flexible leaves to pursue treatment and recovery
- Distributed drug deactivation and disposal products
- Provided opioid safety education about alternatives to opioids for pain management
- Stocked naloxone/Narcan in workplaces and at worksites
- Offered opioid-sparing surgical procedures (or nonopioid alternatives for persons in recovery)
- Codispensed naloxone when plan members were prescribed opioids for injuries, medical and dental procedures

Churchill encourages fellow leaders to visibly and vocally support workplace mental health. "The key to my connections stems from this vulnerability in openly talking about mental health, suicide and grief. It opens the door for others to talk about it as well."

He continued, "I have had many employees discuss very personal issues and hurts with me that normally you would never bring up to your boss. But because I am open about my own pain that I have experienced and the loss I have been through, the tone has been set for others to discuss the same issues and more."

"Life is not easy at all, regardless of your social or economic status. Everyone has troubles, fears and tragedies that they must deal with." Churchill encourages leaders to go first and openly share the struggles and pain in their lives. This clears the path for others to walk down, and removes stigma, shame and blame.

"The culture we strive to create at US Erectors is built on accepting one another without judgment and helping each other regardless of the issue," he said. "This teamwork and trust creates the culture leading to an open dialogue and understanding."

A Contractor's Midyear Report Card

Where you pass, where you fail & what you should change



MARTY MCCARTHY, CPA, CCIFP, is a managing director in the tax practice at CBIZ and serves as the Mid-Atlantic Construction Practice Leader. With more than three decades of experience serving construction companies, his collaborative, solutions-focused approach, combined with deep technical expertise and industry insight, have made him a trusted advisor to clients across the industry. He can be reached at Marty.McCarthy@cbiz.com. Visit cbiz.com.

It's always a good time to sit down, review your business practices and seek out opportunities for improvement. But midyear offers an extra advantage, as the most recent end-of-year review is still relatively fresh in mind, making this an ideal time to assess the accuracy of your forecasts, gauge the efficacy of efforts underway, and take stock of the initiatives that will define the final months of 2026.

Financial Performance

The financial statement paints a picture, but taking a closer look at financials can reveal important details. Start by comparing your revenue to forecasts, gross margin trends, job performance, job costing, work-in-progress (WIP) and cash flow versus profitability.

A business might have cash in the bank but liabilities from overbillings on certain contracts. What does that mean? The composition of the component of working capital may reveal certain issues. Understanding these types of issues and looking at the composition of financials can be a segue to your insights.

Cash and accounts receivable are the be-all and end-all for most businesses in the industry — but not everything. A better understanding can only be reached by digging in to understand if accounts receivable and/or cash contain overbilled liabilities. Ask yourself: "Are we borrowing on our line of credit while also overbilled?" That could foreshadow liquidity issues.

Furthermore, consider equity inclusive of any loans receivable from shareholders or others who have extended repayment terms or no stated repayment terms. It's relatively common for business owners to take loans out of the company, but put that in context by asking harder questions like, "Can we count on getting this back?" Modern businesses are chock-full of useful data, so you likely have the numbers on hand. But only connecting the dots can put values in context to reveal your financial standing.

Backlogs & Pipeline

Now turn to the work itself. Do you have enough to keep busy and, perhaps more importantly, is it the right kind of work? Look at your backlog to assess quality versus quantity. The idea is to align your capacity with margin goals, gain visibility into your pipeline for the next six months, and assess the concentration of customer and project risk.

Your profitability expectations depend largely on the margins associated with your work. For example, for some contractors, data center build-outs and multifamily home construction aren't going to result in similar profit margins. For businesses tackling new lines of work, expectations might be even more of a mystery. Draw the most accurate conclusions based on the data available.

Labor & Operations

Your business depends on its capacity to complete work and its level of productivity in doing so. Look closely to identify and correct issues relating to the availability

of labor, performance of subcontractors (if any), and operational bottlenecks and process gaps.

This may be a good time to assess your need to outsource or adopt other solutions to complete more work or expedite projects. For some, that might mean adopting AI technology to take the burden off the back office and management or exploring a joint venture to augment your labor pool.

Assessing the availability of labor is more complicated today as senior professionals and expert craftsmen enter retirement. Taking a sober look at staffing needs means being careful not to be led by assumptions informed by the past. Look at planned retirements and who may be eligible for pensions, and think critically about avoiding a potential labor crunch while you still have resources available. Ideally, between training programs, AI tools and robotic assistance, your business can achieve parallel coverage across departments.

Midyear Tax Planning & Strategic Adjustments

Midyear tax planning can create better outcomes. The extra time allows for a more thorough analysis of what strategies are working, what compliance needs remain and the elections and opportunities available. Contractors often assume one tax year will be the same as the last, but the tax changes introduced by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) make this a year that requires a fresh look at your tax strategy.

For example, under OBBBA, new definitions apply to what the IRS deems a residential construction project. This is important to recognize and plan for, as it may unlock new accounting methodologies with potential benefits. There are also additional available research and experimentation (R&E), also known as research and development (R&D), and credits and expanded bonus depreciation, among other changes.

Tax planning is an essential part of preserving cash flow. And in construction, cash is still king.

Explore AI

Across industries, AI is making a significant impact on business as usual. How AI fits in is unique to every business, but in construction it's already contributing to safer jobsites, facilitating smarter contracts and building faster, more capable, back-office operations. Midyear might be the ideal time to start looking at how AI can enhance your operations and create a strategic plan to expand or implement AI capabilities with proven, measurable benefits.

Risk, Bonding & Compliance Considerations

As many markets tighten, bonding is still relatively available to contractors. Make the most of what's available by preparing financial statements that help maximize your capacity.

Start by speaking with agents and lenders to understand their expectations, then arrange insurance, anticipate compliance issues and keep risk considerations front and center.

Financing is tightest for those with risk. Limit the cost of your capital by reducing risk wherever possible.

Finally, assess bank covenants and understand what kind of opportunities you can take and where proposed deals might compromise existing covenants. This is particularly crucial for those navigating a tough year. For example, we recently had a client that looked at a life insurance contract, and while it may have looked like a lucrative windfall on its face, the investment vehicle it involved depended on funds barred from inclusion in their bank's working capital calculation. The last thing you want to do is give your bank or bonding partner a reason to walk away.

Turning the Midyear Report Card Into an Action Plan

After applying scrutiny to your business practices, identify the two or three areas with the most room for improvement. Then make realistic adjustments that stand to have a measurable impact in the second half of the year.

Can you improve how you are charting overhead? What does your working capital currently look like? Which tax elections should you pursue? How often are you meeting with your bank and bonding company?

It's one thing to identify areas ripe for improvement, and another to follow through by making meaningful changes.

Positioning for a Strong Year-End

Once your assessment is done and you have an action plan in place, you should have a clear understanding of jobs in progress, the trajectory of those jobs, the standing of your project pipeline and backlogs, emerging industry trends and what you can do to be a stronger contractor by the end of 2026.

Those taking the initiative have their future in their hands. From here, you can go in myriad directions to explore new structures and opportunities, branch out into lucrative markets, initiate joint ventures or pursue exit strategies.

Deal activity is currently strong in construction, with private equity investing in the industry, while roll-ups and consolidations are seemingly more common than ever. Companies that consistently evaluate performance and seek improvement are in the best position to benefit from the active deal environment.

Whether you're considering an exit or not, the midyear review presents an opportunity to assess operations, make meaningful changes and be among those best prepared to finish 2026 strong.

4 Trends Shaping Growth in Engineering & Construction

Inside Deloitte's expectations for 2026

BY MICHELLE MEISELS



Deloitte's 2026 Engineering & Construction (E&C) Industry Outlook points to a defining challenge for the year ahead: Demand is shifting faster than the industry's delivery capacity. After early momentum in 2025, the market softened: Real value-add reached U.S. $890 billion in Q2 2025 (up 1% year over year) while real gross output totaled $1.732 trillion (down 0.6%). By July 2025, total construction spending was down almost 3% year over year, led by declines in commercial (–8.2%) and manufacturing (–7%) construction.

At the same time, pockets of growth are emerging. AI-driven data center construction, and the energy infrastructure required to support it is expected to be a source of demand in 2026, alongside selective opportunities in advanced manufacturing, healthcare and defense. Investment in structures is projected to pivot from a decline in 2025 to modest growth of nearly 1.8% in 2026.

Amid rising material costs, persistent labor shortages and shifting project demand, Deloitte's outlook highlights four trends that E&C firms may consider while planning their growth strategies.

1. Evolving Tariffs

Tariffs may influence job costs and project schedules. Recent tariffs impacted construction material costs, such as 50% tariffs on steel and aluminum. In 2025, the effective tariff rate for construction goods climbed to a 40-year high of 25% to 30%. Despite additional trade deals and reciprocal tariff modifications, the cost of many core construction materials remains elevated. Cost shifts have contributed to shifting project decisions. Project abandonment activity increased in 2025, leading to budget and forecast revisions, and nearly half of engineering and construction executives surveyed by Autodesk described their supply chains as fragile and undiversified.

In response to these pressures, some E&C firms are shifting from ad hoc reaction to repeatable resilience strategies. Some are using strategic stockpiling to buffer price swings, substituting cost-effective alternatives where feasible, expanding vertical integration and increased domestic sourcing, and diversifying suppliers through collaborative scenario planning. Some firms are also refining procurement models (including outsourcing in engineering, procurement and construction or hybrid structures) to help improve cost predictability.

Contracts are another part of the playbook. More builders are incorporating tariff-adjustment or escalation clauses to reduce exposure to cost increases. Where these clauses are absent, contractors may absorb the full impact, potentially impacting timelines or redesigns.

2. Shifting Project Priorities

Construction priorities are shifting under a mix of social, economic, technological, geopolitical and policy developments, with a pivot toward data centers and the infrastructure necessary to support them. The growth of AI and hyperscale computing is changing where capital flows and how labor and resources are allocated across the industry.

Some large firms are responding by reassessing portfolios and investing to compete for megaprojects such as data centers and advanced energy facilities. Many are deepening partnerships around emerging power generation and cooling technologies as they engage with hyperscalers and data center developers. To manage complexity and scale, some firms are increasingly leaning more on digital tools, modular construction and strategic partnerships.

Even as overall commercial construction slowed for much of 2025, data centers and energy infrastructure surged, fueled by rapid AI adoption, increased cloud demand and rising energy needs. The energy requirement is central. By 2035, power demand from U.S. data centers could grow more than fivefold to 176 gigawatts, from 33 gigawatts in 2024; AI data centers are expected to account for most of that increase, potentially reaching 123 gigawatts. That scale expands the opportunity beyond building shells into grid upgrades and related energy infrastructure.

Other segments are moving at a different tempo. Manufacturing construction tied to reshoring policy remains a focus area, though activity has been subdued as businesses weigh timelines, material costs and supply chain reestablishment. Office, retail and mixed-use properties are expected to see moderate, regionally driven growth and

Photo Credit: le- adobestock.com



office-to-residential conversions remain strong in high-vacancy markets.

3. Embracing Digital Transformation

Margin pressure from policy shifts and supply chain disruption is playing a role in rethinking operating models, even as demand rises across data centers, grid-modernization megaprojects and advanced manufacturing. Digital tools are the lever to raise productivity and protect profitability.

The technology stack is becoming more operational for some. Some firms are deploying AI-driven analytics, real-time project management platforms and connected jobsite solutions. Many are piloting agentic AI to manage complex scheduling and coordinate workflows, while safety-focused computer vision can identify hazards quickly. Digital workflows integrating building information modeling (BIM), 3D printing and digital twins are improving planning and reducing rework, with timeline reductions of up to 20% cited.

However, poor quality data can undermine analytics and AI reliability. Capturing the "digital dividend" requires data governance, workforce development, ecosystem partnerships and performance metrics embedded across delivery.

4. Managing Talent Shortage

Labor shortages remain a capacity constraint within the industry. Wages rose 4.2% year over year as of August 2025, and the industry could potentially lose nearly $124 billion in output due to unfilled positions if the gap persists.

Demographics sharpen the challenge: By 2031, 41% of current construction workers are expected to retire, while only 10% of current workers are under 25, and only 7% of potential job seekers consider construction careers. Concentrated demand is intensifying labor pressures, as large-scale projects compete for scarce electricians, welders and HVAC technicians. Projections indicate a potential shortage of over 2 million skilled craft professionals by 2028 if current trends persist. Immigration policies remain a potential factor as well, as nearly 10% of construction and extraction workers are foreign born, according to the Bureau of Labor & Statistics.

The emerging response combines hiring with redesigning delivery models. Some firms are accelerating investment in automation and digital tools, autonomous equipment, robotics, AI-powered scheduling, and prefabrication where feasible. Within engineering functions, AI-driven design tools and augmented reality field instructions can support "learn-as-you-install" workflows. At the same time, these shifts are increasing demand for digitally skilled talent, intensifying competition with technology companies and raising the premium on upskilling.

Building Resilience & Agility for 2026

A common thread across these trends is that resilience is becoming operational rather than aspirational. Financial agility, maintaining liquidity, managing debt wisely and leveraging legislative incentives provides the flexibility to respond to uncertainty, while strategic mergers and acquisitions focused on strengthening digital capabilities can expand competitiveness.

AI is an accelerant across all four trends. From optimizing designs, automating calculations and managing schedules in real time, AI-enabled tools are reshaping how work is delivered. On jobsites, automation is expected to become increasingly visible, helping to address labor shortages while improving safety and performance. In 2026, the organizations that integrate sourcing, delivery, data and workforce in a unified, AI-enabled operating model could be well positioned to win complex work — and deliver it with confidence.

Michelle Meisels is a principal for Deloitte Consulting LLP and Deloitte's Engineering and Construction sector leader. Visit deloitte.com.



From Paperwork to Partnership

How to turn third-party insurance compliance into a better business process

BY KRISTEN NUNERY



Third-party insurance compliance is often treated like routine paperwork. For general contractors (GCs), it is anything but. When certificate of insurance (COI) review and subcontractor onboarding are slow, manual or inconsistent, the consequences extend beyond the back office. They show up in delayed mobilization, heavier staff workloads, weaker coordination and strained subcontractor relationships.

That is why third-party insurance compliance should be treated as a business process, not just an administrative requirement. The real issue is not simply whether documents are collected. It is whether trade partners can move through onboarding efficiently, whether standards are applied consistently and whether project teams have a clear view of what is approved, what is missing and what needs to happen next.

When general contractors improve their COI process, they do more than reduce paperwork. They remove hidden operational drag, help jobs start on time and create a smoother, more predictable experience for the subcontractors they rely on. AI can support that effort by speeding routine review, improving visibility and helping teams resolve common issues faster. The larger goal is not faster paperwork but a more reliable way to move work forward.

Slow COI Review Can Delay Project Mobilization for General Contractors

A nonresidential project is ready to start, the field team is in place and the work is lined up — only for the schedule to slip. Often, the problem is not labor or site readiness. It is incomplete insurance documentation, unclear requirements or a slow path to resolution.

What should be a routine onboarding step turns into a chain of emails, phone calls, corrections and rechecks. Project managers follow up with subcontractors. Risk or compliance teams review resubmitted documents. Administrators track down status updates. Meanwhile, work that should be mobilizing remains stalled.

Because this kind of friction is so common, it is easy to dismiss it as part of doing business. But the cost is real. When project teams spend time chasing paperwork instead of moving work forward, what looks like a documentation issue quickly becomes a schedule issue, a staffing issue and sometimes a margin issue.

How Third-Party Insurance Compliance Shapes Subcontractor Onboarding

Subcontractors do not experience COI review as a back-office function. They experience it as part of onboarding. It is one of the first signals they receive about what working with a GC will be like.

Are the requirements clear from the start? Are missing items identified quickly? Is the path to approval predictable? Are standards applied the same way from one project to the next? Is the GC easy to work with when something needs to be corrected?

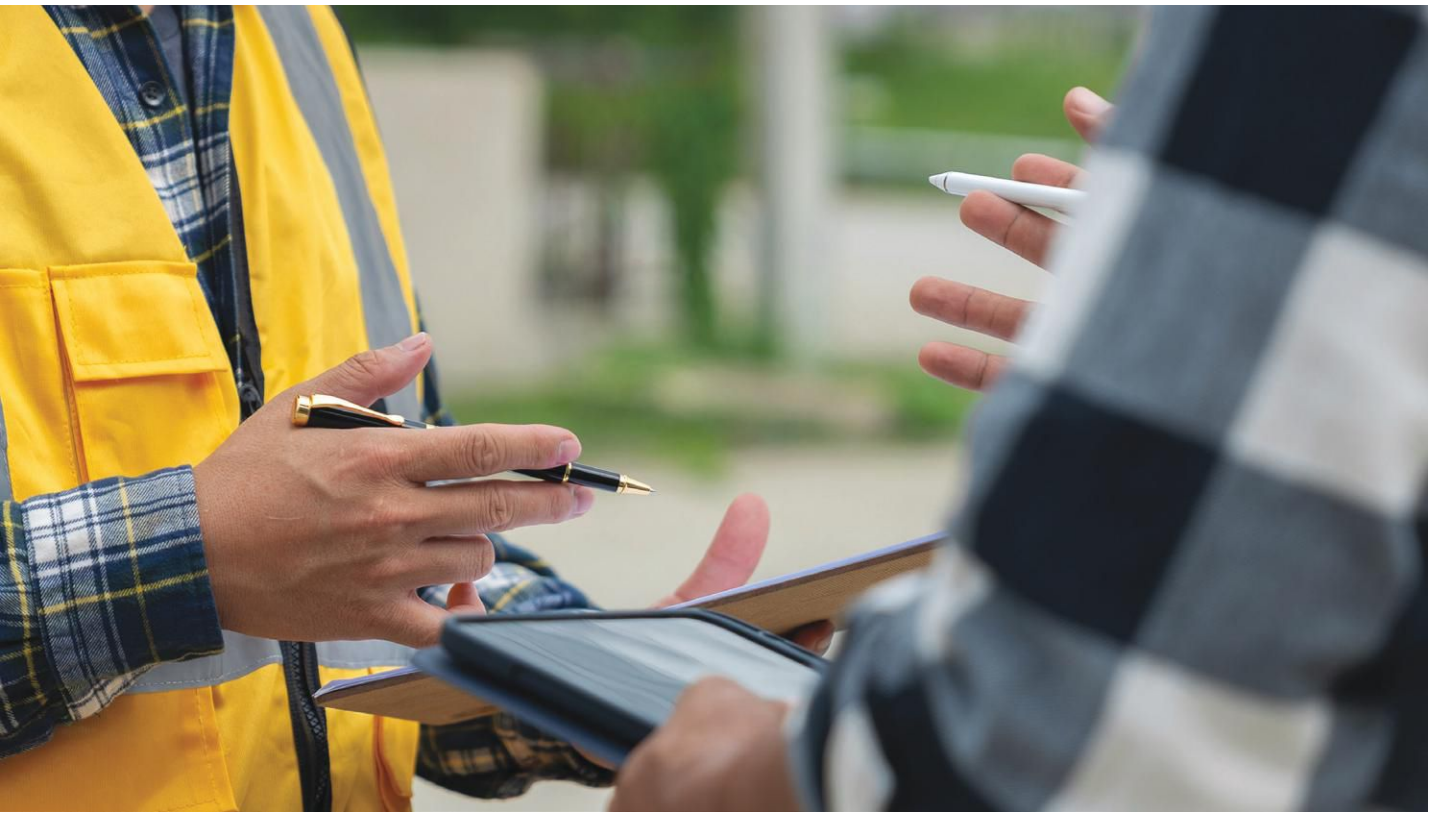
Those questions matter because compliance friction sets the tone before work even begins. When requirements are vague, feedback is delayed or standards are applied inconsistently, subcontractors can feel stuck in an administrative maze. Frustration builds early, before the job is even underway.

When the process is clear and timely, the opposite happens. Compliance supports the working relationship instead of straining it. It helps both sides start from a place of alignment rather than confusion. In that sense, insurance compliance is not separate from subcontractor partnership. It is part of how that partnership begins.

The Business Cost of Slow COI Review & Third-Party Insurance Compliance Workflows

The real cost of third-party insurance compliance is the lost momentum when insurance review delays a subcontractor's ability to start work.

Photo Credit: Phimwilai- adobestock.com



BITCO INSURANCE COMPANIES

BUILT TO PROTECT YOU.

Delivering quality coverage for contractors across the country.

Your business builds America's foundation of success. We're proud to serve contractors, our largest class of business, with policies that meet their unique coverage needs. Since 1917, BITCO has provided customized insurance programs across the country, dedicated to protecting you and delivering confidence day-in and day-out.



Get the service you deserve.
Visit **BITCO.com** to find a specialist agent near you.

OLD REPUBLIC INSURANCE GROUP

The business impact is felt across schedules, staffing, consistency and timelines. Schedules slip when subcontractors cannot mobilize due to unresolved insurance issues. Staff time is consumed by manual review, follow-up, rereview of corrected documents and status checks across teams. Requirements may be applied differently across projects or offices, creating confusion for subcontractors and inconsistent risk exposure for the contractor. Work that should begin earlier gets pushed later, compressing already tight timelines.

Taken together, these are not isolated administrative hassles. They shape how efficiently a GC can bring trade partners on to a project and keep jobs moving. For firms managing multiple projects, offices or sectors, manual compliance workflows can become a barrier to growth, adding overhead without expanding capacity.

What an Efficient Third-Party Insurance Compliance Process Looks Like

Improving the COI process starts with treating third-party insurance compliance as a structured operational workflow.

An efficient process starts by making requirements clear before documents are submitted. It defines ownership of follow-up and applies review standards consistently across teams and jobs. It also makes status visible without forcing staff to chase updates, and it routes exceptions to the right person for judgment. Exceptions are easy to identify and route to the right person for judgment.

When those elements are in place, compliance becomes easier to manage and easier for subcontractors to navigate. Teams spend less time reacting and more time keeping work on track.

This is where AI can help. Platforms that use AI can automate document intake, compare submissions against project-specific requirements, flag missing items, send more specific follow-up and improve visibility into compliance status across teams. That can reduce repetitive manual work and accelerate routine review. Human judgment still matters for complex endorsements, unusual policy structures and project-specific carve-outs. The goal is not to remove people from the process. It is to make the process more consistent, scalable and less dependent on repeated manual effort.

6 Benefits of Improving COI Review & Subcontractor Onboarding

A better third-party insurance compliance process does more than reduce paperwork. It helps general contractors move projects forward faster, work more consistently and create a smoother experience for the trade partners they depend on.

Here are six of the most important business benefits:

- *Faster subcontractor onboarding* — A clearer, more consistent process helps trade partners get approved sooner and reduces delays at the front end of a job.
- *Fewer administrative delays* — Project managers, administrators and risk staff spend less time on repetitive review and follow-up, freeing them to focus on work that more directly supports project execution.
- *Better coordination* — When compliance status is easier to see and more trustworthy, there is less disconnect between documentation management and what is happening in the field.
- *More consistent standards across jobs* — Standardized workflows reduce the likelihood that one project team will interpret requirements differently from another, helping both internal staff and repeat subcontractors operate with greater confidence.
- *Earlier visibility into recurring risk* — When common documentation gaps or coverage issues are more visible, firms have a better chance of addressing them before they cause downstream delays or disputes.
- *Stronger subcontractor relationships* — When requirements are communicated clearly and approvals move more efficiently, trade partners are less likely to be stalled by a process they do not fully understand. The result is a smoother working relationship and a better experience for the subcontractors.

How GCs Should Evaluate Their COI Review & Third-Party Insurance Compliance Process

For general contractors trying to determine whether compliance is helping or hurting project execution, a few operational questions can quickly reveal the real bottleneck. They should start by looking at how long it takes a new subcontractor to clear insurance requirements from submission to approval, who owns follow-up, and whether that responsibility is clearly defined and consistently applied.

They should also examine how often projects stall because insurance documents are incomplete, incorrect or unclear, and where staff lose the most time, whether in initial review, follow-up, rereview or status tracking. Finally, they should consider whether standards are applied consistently

A clearer, more consistent third-party insurance compliance process helps trade partners get approved sooner and reduces delays at the front end of a job.

across different projects, project managers and offices, and whether subcontractors experience clear, timely feedback or repeated and confusing requests.

Answers that reveal delays, inconsistencies or distributed accountability usually point to a workflow functioning as an operational drag rather than as support. General contractors should focus on fixing that underlying process problem.

Why Better COI Processes Reduce Delays & Build Stronger Relationships

Third-party insurance compliance may never be the most visible part of project execution. But it is one of the processes that quietly shapes whether work starts smoothly, whether teams stay aligned and whether subcontractor relationships begin with friction or trust.

For GCs, COI review and subcontractor onboarding are no longer just administrative steps. They are part of the trade partner experience. In a market where the best subcontractors can choose which GCs they work with, the speed, clarity and consistency of onboarding send an important signal. A slow, confusing or inconsistent compliance process can create frustration before work even begins. A clear, responsive and well-managed process can build confidence from the start.

General contractors who treat COI review and onboarding as an operational discipline — not just a documentation requirement — put themselves in a stronger position to reduce delays, apply standards consistently, and create a better experience for both internal teams and trade partners. AI can support that effort by making routine work faster, more visible and easier to manage. But the bigger opportunity is not automation alone. It is building a third-party compliance process that helps general contractors and their administrators reduce the struggle between risk and operations: maintaining consistent insurance standards while helping projects move, partnerships start on the right footing and preferred subcontractors view the GC as easier to work with.



Kristen Nunery is CEO of illumend, the AI-native compliance platform built on 16 years of myCOI expertise. She founded myCOI in 2009 and now leads illumend's mission to help businesses reduce risk, streamline compliance and strengthen third-party relationships through AI that understands insurance. Visit illumend.ai.



Elevating the Trades

Training strategies to address the skilled labor shortage

BY SARA VINCENT

For many contractors today, the challenge isn't a lack of work — it's having the workforce to get the job done. As skilled labor becomes harder to find, companies across the construction industry are rethinking how they build and sustain their teams. Increasingly, the most effective strategy isn't focused solely on recruiting new workers but on developing the people already on the job.

Workforce development has become a practical business priority. Contractors who invest in continuous skill development are better positioned to support safer jobsites, maintain productivity and create opportunities for long-term employee growth. One area where training can have an immediate and measurable impact is equipment operation.

Across the trades, the demand for skilled craft professionals continues to grow. Meeting that demand requires more than simply making training available; it requires creating accessible pathways for both experienced workers and those new to the industry to build skills and stay aligned with current standards. In this environment, training becomes a core part of how work gets done, not just a support function.

Making Equipment Training a Safety & Operational Priority

Equipment training plays a central role in reducing jobsite risk and supporting consistent operations. When tradespeople understand proper operating procedures, they are better prepared to perform their work safely and respond effectively to unexpected situations. Training reinforces not only day-to-day tasks, but also the awareness and decision-making needed when conditions change.

In many cases, training is also a requirement. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations mandate operator certification in the U.S., supported by machine-specific standards such as the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). These standards, including the ANSI A92 guidelines for mobile elevated work platforms (MEWPs), are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current best practices for equipment operation and care. Aligning training programs with these standards helps contractors maintain compliance while supporting safe jobsite performance.

Beyond safety and compliance, equipment training contributes directly to how efficiently work is completed. Operators who are trained on the equipment they use every day can work with greater precision and confidence, helping keep projects moving and reducing interruptions caused by improper use or avoidable errors.

Contractors can take practical steps to align training with jobsite needs and compliance requirements:

- Audit current operator certifications to comply with applicable industry standards
- Identify the equipment types most used across projects
- Schedule refresher training based on real jobsite experiences, including incidents or near-misses

Investing in Training That Supports Productivity & Longevity

Training also plays a role in protecting equipment and supporting long-term operational efficiency. Workers who understand how to properly operate and maintain machinery are less likely to contribute to avoidable damage, helping reduce repair needs and unplanned downtime. Over time, consistent and proper use can extend equipment's service life and support more predictable performance in the field.

Effective training programs reflect the realities of the jobsite. Workers are more likely to engage in training that is relevant to their day-to-day responsibilities and accessible within their schedules. Blended learning approaches — combining online instruction with hands-on experience — can help reinforce knowledge while allowing flexibility. Involving supervisors in the process further connects training to real-world expectations and accountability.

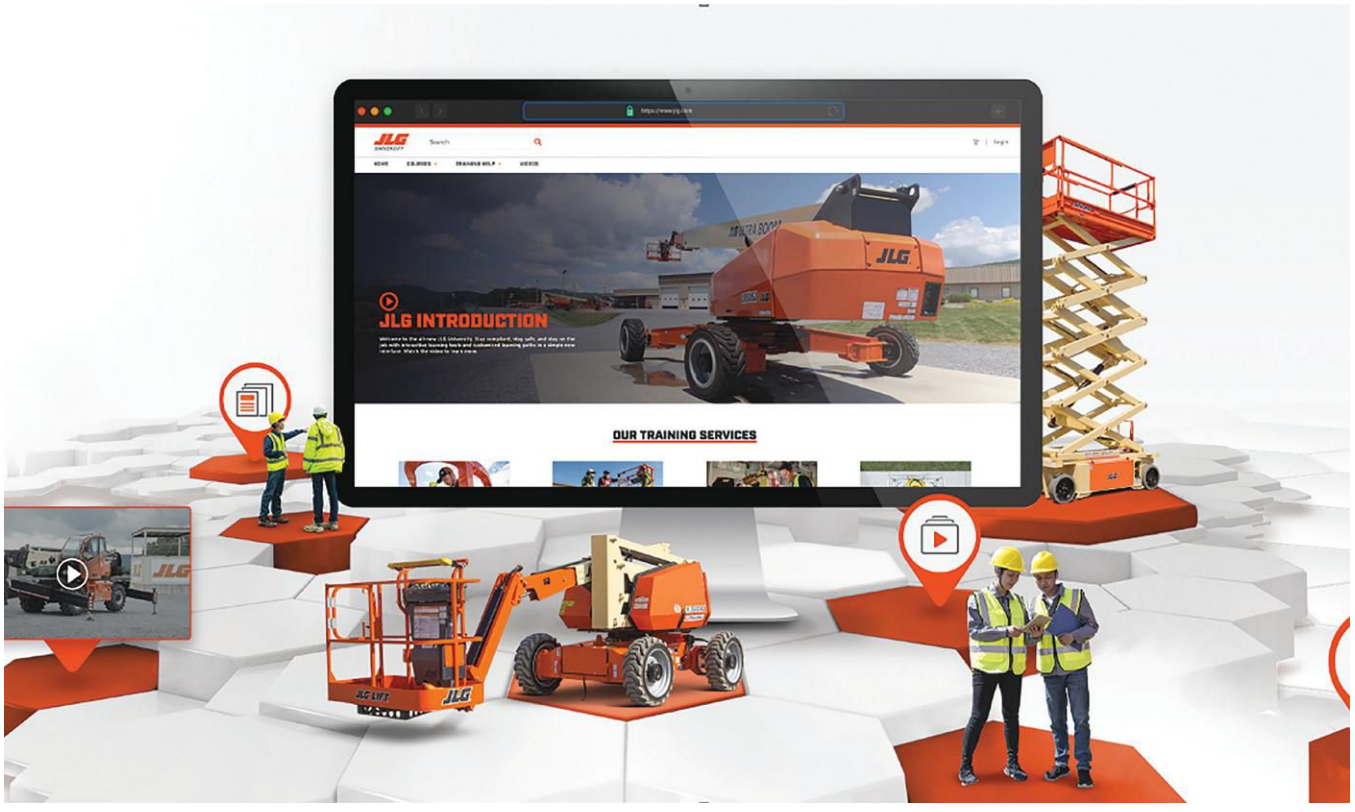
Many contractors also look beyond their own organizations for training support. Manufacturers, rental partners, trade associations and industry organizations often provide resources that can help expand access to equipment-specific training and best practices.

Strengthening the Workforce Through Strategic Partnerships

In addition to internal efforts, workforce



Photo Credits: JLG



ONE MORE LIFE SAVING TOOL
PROVIDES ONE MORE CHANCE

Jobsites are equipped for every emergency; rapid overdose response should be no different. Keep naloxone on hand, learn how to use it, and be ready to save a life on the job.

NALOXONE
OVERDOSE REVERSAL KIT

Learn more at
www.safeproject.us/naloxone

SAFEProject
Stop the Addiction Fatality Epidemic

SSC
UNDERGROUND
Design · Locate · Build

development often depends on industrywide collaboration. Partnerships with trade associations, unions and educational institutions help create broader access to training opportunities while supporting alignment with current standards and expectations.

Organizations such as Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industry (AWCI), Mason Contractors Association of America (MCAA) and Steel Erectors Association of America (SEAA), along with trade unions and local partners, play an important role in helping contractors stay connected to evolving industry practices.

"We can't solve the skilled labor shortage on our own. That's why it's important to partner with trade associations, unions, technical schools and industry groups to help upskill professionals and bring real-world equipment, certified training and industry standards directly to the people who need it most," said Andy Tacelosky, chief operating officer at JLG. "Working alongside these organizations, it's not just about training people; it's helping them build lasting careers."





These partnerships are effective because they combine shared goals with practical resources. They provide access to equipment, experienced instructors and local or regional training opportunities that reflect the needs of specific trades and communities. For contractors, engaging a partner can help expand training capacity and strengthen workforce development efforts.

Building the Pipeline Before Graduation

For many companies, workforce development also starts before workers ever reach the jobsite. Engaging with students at the high school and technical college level helps introduce the trades as a viable and rewarding career path while creating early opportunities for hands-on experience.

Programs that combine classroom learning with real-world work exposure give students a clearer understanding of the skills required in the field. Paid work experiences, mentorship and defined pathways into full-time roles help bridge the gap between education and employment.

Programs like JLG's School-to-Work initiative demonstrate how this model can be applied, providing students with the opportunity to earn school credit while gaining experience in areas such as welding, assembly and fabrication. More broadly, they reflect an approach that contractors of all sizes can adapt by introducing early exposure to the trades, offering paid learning opportunities and creating clear pathways into the workforce.

"In America today, there are more students who want hands-on technical education than there are classroom seats available," said Tacelosky. "We see an opportunity not only to hire talent but to help create it, one student, one trainee and one craft professional at a time."

Developing the Workforce You Already Have

While building future talent is essential, contractors are also focused on strengthening the teams they already employ. Internal training programs create opportunities for current workers to develop new skills and advance into high-demand roles, particularly in areas where experienced labor can be difficult to find.

Hands-on training, combined with mentorship from experienced workers, helps reinforce both technical skills and jobsite expectations. It also creates a more structured approach to career progression, allowing employees to see how skill development connects to long-term opportunities within the company.

"Welding and painting require skill, safety, precision and pride in craft, and these are often some of the most difficult roles in construction to fill," said Tacelosky. "Instead of waiting for talent to come, choose to grow it, building careers and strengthening a workforce for the future."

Contractors can begin by identifying roles with the highest demand or turnover, pairing experienced workers with trainees and establishing clear milestones tied to skill development and advancement.

Training as a Long-Term Workforce Strategy

Workforce development is not a short-term initiative. It is an ongoing strategy that supports jobsite safety, consistent operations and a strong, capable workforce over time. As the industry continues to evolve, training remains one of the most effective ways contractors can respond to changing demands, while maintaining quality and performance.

Getting started does not require a complete overhaul. Contractors can take incremental steps by reviewing current training gaps, engaging with a partner organization and piloting a targeted upskilling effort within their teams.

As demands on the construction workforce continue to grow, ensuring that tradespeople — from apprentices to experienced professionals — are properly trained in equipment operation is more than a safety measure. It is a practical investment in how work gets done today and how the workforce will be sustained in the future.

Sara Vincent is the director of marketing for JLG, a manufacturer of mobile elevating work platforms and telehandlers. JLG was founded in 1969 and today has products and personnel across the globe. The company's safety management system has earned OSHA and ISO certifications in North America and around the world. Visit jlg.com.





CREATING A CULTURE OF SAFETY

Empower crews at every level

BY RANDY DOMBROWSKI

Photo Credit Sam Edwards/KOTO - adobestock.com

Safety is a visible part of construction work. On most jobsites, you'll see hard hats, high-visibility vests, signage and protective equipment. But a strong safety culture goes beyond physical safeguards. It's the spoken and unspoken, top-down messages and policies that determine how safe workers actually are in the field.

Crews are often stretched thin as experienced workers retire and newer employees take on complex responsibilities, sometimes with limited training. According to Sentry's 2026 C-Suite Stress Index, 44% of executives say employees are performing tasks they aren't fully trained for, and 84% report workers are taking on responsibilities outside their roles. This can lead to:

- Higher workers' compensation claims
- Increased insurance premiums
- Project delays from lost labor
- Rework and productivity loss

For construction businesses, particularly midsized contractors, these impacts can extend beyond a single jobsite — affecting schedules, budgets and client relationships.

There's also a human impact to consider. Workplace injuries can disrupt not only operations, but also the lives of employees and their families. That's why safety training and expectations need to reflect the realities of today's workforce.

Why Safety Culture Matters to a Business

Most contractors have a safety program in place. Fewer have a fully embedded safety culture. When safety becomes part of how a business operates — not just something enforced — it can support stability in several key areas:

- *Workforce retention and recruitment* — In a competitive labor market, workers pay close attention to how employers approach safety. A consistent, well-communicated safety culture can signal professionalism and support long-term retention. Sentry's Survey found that 83% of executives plan to increase investment in worker safety, with goals tied directly to retention and recruitment.
- *Operational continuity* — Projects depend on consistency. When experienced workers are sidelined due to injury, companies often must backfill with less-experienced labor, further increasing risk.
- *Cost management* — Fewer incidents may help reduce claim frequency and support more predictable insurance-related costs over time.
- *Reputation with clients and partners* — Owners, developers and general contractors are increasingly evaluating safety performance. A strong track record can help strengthen business relationships and support new opportunities.

What a Strong Safety Culture Looks Like Today

A strong safety culture is reflected in daily behaviors, including:

1. Clear Expectations From Day 1

Safety starts before a worker steps onto a jobsite.

- Job descriptions outline safety responsibilities
- Interviews include safety-related questions
- Onboarding reinforces expectations early

2. Ongoing, Practical Training

Training shouldn't be limited to orientation.

- Regular toolbox talks tied to current jobsite risks
- Scenario-based training for high-risk activities (e.g., trenching, heavy equipment)
- Reinforcement of core practices over time

Short, focused training that connects to real work environments tends to be more effective than one-time sessions.

3. Empowerment at Every Level

Crews need to know they can speak up.

- Workers are encouraged to pause work when conditions appear unsafe
- Supervisors respond constructively
- Feedback processes are clear and consistently applied

When employees feel accountable and supported, safety behaviors are more likely to improve.

4. Leadership Visibility

Safety culture is reinforced through leadership actions:

- Supervisors model safe behavior in the field
- Managers communicate expectations consistently
- Leadership participates in safety conversations, not just audits

If safety only shows up during inspections, a culture of safety won't form. Consistent safety messaging is key.

5. Recognition & Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement can help sustain momentum. This approach helps position safety as a shared value, not just a requirement.

- Recognize teams for safe practices
- Share lessons learned from near misses
- Acknowledge milestones tied to safe operations.

Where Training Breaks Down & How to Address It

Safety programs often fall short when they don't align with how work is actually performed. Common challenges include:

- Training that doesn't reflect specific jobsite risks
- Limited reinforcement beyond initial onboarding
- Inconsistent follow-up when unsafe behaviors are identified
- Gaps between written policies and field practices

Conducting a risk assessment — internally or with support from your insurance provider — can help identify where training may need to evolve. This may include evaluating:

- Tasks performed by less-experienced workers
- Jobs requiring specialized equipment or procedures
- Work environments with elevated risk (e.g., excavation, confined spaces)

From there, training can be adjusted to target real-world scenarios, not just general principles.

The Role of Insurance in Safety Training

For many construction business owners, insurance is viewed primarily as protection after something goes wrong. It can also play a proactive role. Many insurance providers offer access to safety resources, including:

- Jobsite evaluations to identify potential gaps
- Guidance on developing or refining safety programs
- Training materials tailored to construction operations
- Support with regulatory and industry requirements

Getting Started or Strengthening Your Approach

The path forward doesn't require a complete overhaul. It starts with a few focused steps:

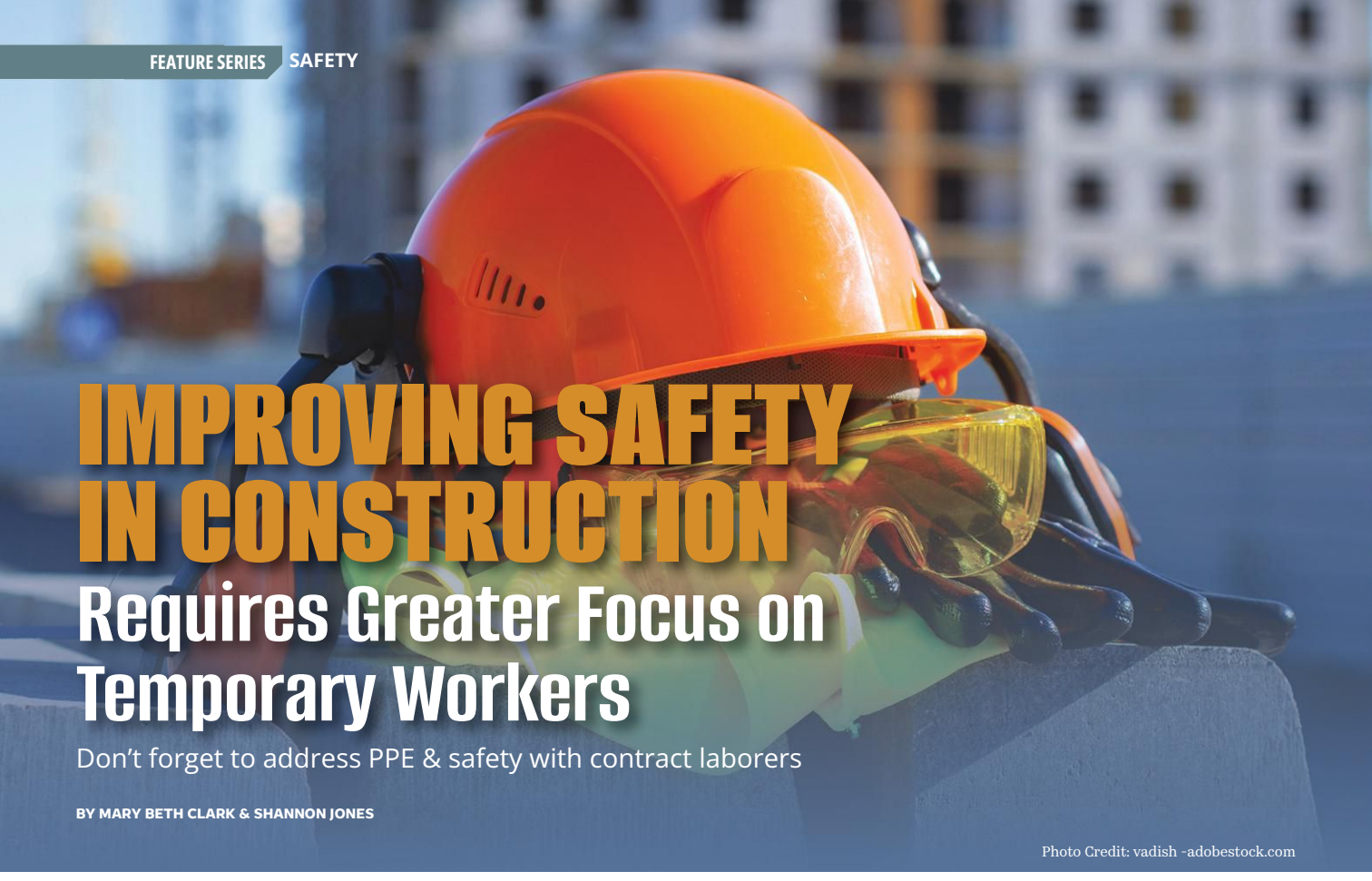
1. *Evaluate current practices* — Where are incidents happening? Where are workers least experienced?
2. *Align training with real risks* — Focus on the tasks and environments that carry the most exposure.
3. *Integrate safety into hiring and onboarding* — Set expectations early and consistently.
4. *Create accountability at all levels* — From leadership to field crews, safety should be shared.
5. *Engage with your insurer* — Use available resources to assess and improve your approach.

Building a Safer, More Resilient Operation

Construction work involves inherent risk. The difference lies in how effectively organizations prepare for and manage those risks. When safety expectations are clear, training reflects real-world conditions, and leadership reinforces consistent behaviors, teams are better equipped to work safely. Over time, that consistency supports stronger operations and more predictable outcome.

Randy Dombrowski is the director of safety services for commercial lines at Sentry Insurance. He works with commercial construction businesses throughout the industry to improve safety and reduce risks. Visit sentry.com.





IMPROVING SAFETY IN CONSTRUCTION Requires Greater Focus on Temporary Workers

Don't forget to address PPE & safety with contract laborers

BY MARY BETH CLARK & SHANNON JONES

Photo Credit: vadish -adobestock.com

Employers in the construction industry face increased safety challenges as jobsites and work crews change daily. Temporary workers are vital to the construction industry, yet they are often overlooked when it comes to safety. Maintaining a consistent commitment to safety and ongoing training for all site workers is essential to completing projects without injury.

The Construction & Temporary Labor Connection

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Temporary Worker Initiative Series, in 2024, over 2.7 million temporary workers were employed, with a significant amount of those in the construction sector hired through staffing agencies. Additionally, the Federal Reserve recently noted that current economic conditions may be increasing demand for contract labor.

Research suggests that these temporary workers are more likely to be injured on the job than their full-time counterparts. With a rising number of temporary workers and increasing likelihood of higher risk of injury, OSHA was prompted to release its 15th bulletin on what is known as the Temporary Worker Initiative (TWI). The TWI provides guidance to employers on safety responsibilities and highlights specific issues involving temporary worker safety.

The TWI bulletin 15, Construction Industry Employment, addresses regulations and best practices around the utilization of contingent, contract and temporary labor on construction jobsites.

Construction Safety Training Ownership Shouldn't Be a Mystery

The safety of temporary workers on jobsites is frequently neglected, largely because it is not always clear who holds responsibility for their safety training. Often, this uncertainty occurs when combining temporary workers and subcontracted companies that have different resources and responsibilities. The ambiguity in oversight can result in important safety measures being missed, as each party may assume the other is handling the necessary training and guidance. OSHA TWI Bulletin 15 addresses how these distinctions influence the safety and training of temporary workers on construction sites, underscoring the need for clear assignment of responsibilities.

What Role Does a Staffing Agency Play in Construction Worker Safety?

A staffing agency focused on temporary worker safety will ask the subcontractor or general contractor questions to ensure the most qualified workers are identified for the project; such as:

- What is the desired level of experience?
- What qualifications or credentials are necessary (such as an OSHA 10 or 30)?

Clear expectations and consistency across all labor types foster a culture where all employees feel valued, included and able to speak up about safety issues or solutions.

- What are the physical requirements of the job being done?

Prior to sending temporary workers to a jobsite, it is critical to discuss what personal protective equipment (PPE) is required. It is important to outline which party is providing the PPE so temporary workers are effectively protected while performing job duties. In some instances, host employers may be best suited to provide the PPE. In other situations, the staffing agency may provide the items necessary for the job. No matter the circumstances, this should be agreed upon before beginning work so temporary workers are effectively protected from day one on the jobsite.

If a staffing agency is providing PPE, the type and requirements needed should be relayed to the agency so that the correct equipment can be procured and distributed. The host employer is most aware of the hazards and should select what is needed. Providing the model and manufacturer of the equipment can be an advantage. Even if the staffing agency is providing the PPE, the host employer is still ultimately responsible for ensuring that the PPE is adequate, worn correctly and in good condition. OSHA's recent final rule on construction PPE still holds true for contingent labor on sizing, fit and adequacy.

Lack of training is a common complaint among temporary workers and a roadblock to performing the job safely. Companies can avoid training pitfalls by discussing training responsibilities with staffing providers. OSHA's TWI indicates joint responsibility for safety training. Staffing agencies are responsible for a general awareness level of training and safety practices. However, host employers are in the best position to provide site-specific safety training, as they best understand the hazards and specific requirements of the jobsite. Delineating who will provide what training at the onset of a staffing partnership is key to ensuring temporary workers are receiving comprehensive training on all topics applicable to the jobsite.

What Role Does the Host Employer Play in Temporary Worker Safety?

The host employer is in the best position and is generally responsible for providing the oversight, supervision and direction of the work being done. The host should routinely conduct worksite assessments, inspections and ensure that all protection is utilized and in place. This can mean that general site safety training, as well as any related specific training (like scaffolding), is best performed by the host. Safety rules vary from jobsite to jobsite. Setting a temporary worker up for safety success in these environments includes training on specific site protocols like emergency action plans, confined spaces, welding, fall protection, trenching and any stop-work authority that exists. The host employer should coordinate with the staffing company to ensure that all topics are being effectively trained in either the temporary staffing onboarding or the host employer's onboarding.

Even experienced construction workers need time to adjust to the nuances of a new jobsite. Making certain that all workers have access to adequate safety training keeps everyone on the same page without putting the crew at unnecessary risk. All training should be documented, and records of training should be shared between both host and staffing provider upon request.

Nonnegotiable safety rules and handling of safety violations should be discussed with the staffing agency prior to employee placement to prevent miscommunication. This keeps lines of safety communication open and allows proper documentation for both employers in the process. Clear expectations and consistency across all labor types foster a culture where all employees feel valued, included and able to speak up about safety issues or solutions.

According to Aerotek's Job Seeker Survey, 89% of respondents indicated a preference for companies that focus on employee safety. An active safety culture keeps workers returning, focused on the task at hand and looking out for their coworkers.

Construction involves many components, including temporary workers. Early coordination with staffing companies on PPE, training and safety rules helps ensure temporary worker success. This approach supports safety commitment across all teams and reduces injuries.

Mary Beth Clark is a lead regional safety manager at Aerotek and Actalent with over 17 years of experience in occupational safety. She is an authorized OSHA outreach trainer in general industry and construction. Prior to joining the staffing industry, she led safety project management and safety culture improvement in projects from construction phases to end user manufacturing. Clark is passionate about keeping temporary workers safe in all work environments.



Shannon Jones is a regional safety manager at Aerotek and Actalent with over 15 years of experience helping employers evaluate body mechanics and ergonomics. He is an authorized OSHA outreach trainer in general industry and construction. Jones partners with clients to provide safety consultations, process improvements and risk mitigation. Visit aerotek.com and actalent.com.





Safety Starts With WHAT'S UNDER THE HARD HAT

How leaders can prioritize mental health on the jobsite

BY ROCKY ROWLETT

Photo Credit: kichigin19-adobestock.com

Construction has made major progress in reducing physical injuries over the last several decades. Companies have invested heavily in training, planning, fall protection, electrical safety programs and operational risk management (ORM) processes that help crews recognize hazards before work begins. Yet one safety risk continues to grow across the industry and often goes unnoticed until something goes wrong: mental fatigue.

Construction leaders today are navigating workforce shortages, demanding schedules, labor pressures and rising burnout across both field and office teams. At the same time, the industry continues to face high suicide rates compared to many other professions. Those challenges are not separate from safety. They directly affect how people show up, communicate, make decisions and perform work on jobsites every day.

Increasingly, mental fatigue is no longer just a personal wellness issue. It has become an operational and safety concern that directly impacts decision-making, communication, crew performance and risk exposure on jobsites.

In construction, crews rely on one another to stay safe. A distracted worker might miss a step in a process. An exhausted supervisor might overlook a changing condition. Someone dealing with significant stress might stop speaking up during planning conversations or lose focus while performing high-risk work.

The industry has spent years teaching people how to identify hazards. Now, many contractors are recognizing the need to pay closer attention to the human factors that contribute to risk, because safety doesn't only depend on the condition of the jobsite. It also depends on the condition of the people working on it.

The Safety Risks You Can't Always See

For years, conversations around mental health in construction were often treated separately from daily operations. Support resources existed, but they typically lived within human resources or employee assistance programs instead of becoming part of how field leaders approached safety and workforce readiness.

More organizations are recognizing what many safety leaders are already seeing firsthand on jobsites: Mental health affects situational awareness, communication, decision-making and overall jobsite performance.

When someone is mentally drained or distracted, it doesn't just affect that individual. It can impact an entire crew and increase the likelihood of mistakes on the jobsite.

That doesn't mean supervisors need to become counselors. It simply means leaders need to recognize that mental fatigue can create the same type of elevated risk exposure as rushing work, poor planning or communication breakdowns.

The companies making meaningful progress aren't treating mental health as a standalone campaign that appears once a year during Mental Health Awareness Month. Instead, they're

integrating these conversations into the existing safety practices and leadership behaviors already happening year-round.

Bringing Mental Health Into Safety Conversations

One of the most effective approaches companies can take is keeping the conversation practical.

In construction, crews already discuss risks every day through toolbox talks, pretask planning and ORM conversations. Adding mental health awareness into those conversations doesn't require overcomplicating the process. In many cases, it starts with leaders asking better questions and paying closer attention to how crews are showing up before work begins.

- Is the crew overly fatigued after a demanding stretch of work?
- Does a team member seem unusually quiet or disengaged?
- Has communication changed?
- Is stress affecting focus or decision-making?

These small conversations can help identify concerns before they become larger safety issues. Some organizations are also reinforcing these conversations through regular safety communications, everyday leadership interactions and peer-driven awareness efforts that help normalize the topic across crews and jobsites. At Faith Technologies Incorporated, this is grounded in a "Stronger Together" mindset that encourages teams to view mental health through the same lens as physical safety. The focus is on shared responsibility, daily behaviors and leadership presence, not a once-a-year conversation.

Many companies are also helping supervisors recognize when someone is "not themselves." Sometimes that shows up through changes in behavior or communication. Other times, it may be someone who suddenly seems distracted, disconnected from the crew or less engaged during planning discussions. The goal isn't diagnosis. It's recognizing concerns early and creating an environment where workers feel comfortable speaking up before issues escalate.

Construction has traditionally rewarded toughness and self-reliance, which can make conversations about stress and mental fatigue uncomfortable for some workers. Many people still hesitate to speak openly because they don't want to appear weak or distracted. That's why leadership behavior matters.

When supervisors openly acknowledge that stress, burnout and mental fatigue are real safety concerns, it helps normalize those conversations across crews and jobsites. It also helps create environments where workers feel more comfortable speaking up when something is wrong instead of staying silent.

Recovery Is Part of Safe Performance

Construction remains one of the most physically and mentally demanding industries in the workforce. Long hours, travel, production pressure and constant schedule changes can wear people down over time. More companies are beginning to recognize that recovery should be treated as part of safe performance, not as an afterthought, especially in high-risk environments where focus, decision-making and mental readiness directly affect a worker's ability to perform safely.

That recovery may look different for every worker. For some, it means taking time to mentally reset after an intense project phase. For others, recovery may involve spending time with family, prioritizing sleep, seeking professional support or simply stepping away long enough to reset mentally and physically. The important shift happening across the industry is the growing recognition that burnout affects far more than just morale. It changes how people engage with their crews, respond to changing conditions and make decisions throughout their workday. Those impacts can influence attention, engagement and safety outcomes.

When team members are constantly operating in survival mode, the risk of errors increases. Forward-thinking organizations are creating cultures where taking care of yourself is not viewed as weakness, but as part of maintaining readiness and long-term performance. That starts with leaders who are willing to check in, listen and create supportive environments where workers know they do not have to struggle in silence.

What Construction Leaders Can Do Right Now

Improving mental health awareness on jobsites doesn't require building an entirely new safety system. Most companies already have the framework in place. In many cases, it starts by incorporating mental health discussions into everyday safety conversations. Practical steps include:

- Training leaders to recognize changes in behavior, communication or engagement that may signal elevated risk.
- Encouraging crews to look out for one another and speak up early when something doesn't feel right
- Making support resources visible and easy to access
- Reinforcing that speaking up about mental readiness is part of working safely, not a sign of weakness

Often, the most effective changes are also the simplest. Leaders don't need to become mental health experts, but they do need to recognize that safety isn't only about preventing injuries. It's also about creating environments where people feel supported and mentally prepared to perform their work safely every day.

Rocky Rowlett is vice president of safety at Faith Technologies Incorporated, where he leads safety strategy and workforce well-being initiatives across a national field workforce. With 25 years of experience in construction safety leadership, he is passionate about strengthening safety culture and helping teams create safer, more connected jobsites. Visit faithtechinc.com.





SAFETY'S SIREN SONG

How to change the tune of 'zero'

BY LIBBY PRITCHARD

Photo Credit Yevhen- adobestock.com

For years, our industry has upheld the noble pursuit of "zero injuries" and pursued it as our north star. The mantra is ingrained and subconsciously slips into conversations, planning sessions and motivational speeches. It's in our physical environment too. We proudly post it at entrances, stitch it to vests and sticker "ZERO" on our hard hats. But let's be candid: Asking for zero is asking for perfection, which is unattainable because people are inherently fallible. We make mistakes. All of us slip, trip and fall sometimes, despite our best intentions and efforts.

I can almost hear the rebuttals through the page (or screen): "Of course people aren't perfect, but we aren't OK with anyone getting hurt, and who wants to work for a company that expects injuries?" Agreed, and fair point. Please do not wake up tomorrow and tell your safety director to change the entrance sign to "Taking injuries in stride since '85."

But consider this: Isn't weaving "We aim for zero" into the — sometimes literal — fabric of our companies subtly telling employees, "We aim for perfection"? To the true zero believers: If you believe zero accidents is a permanently attainable goal, are you willing to bet your workers' comp insurance on that belief? The gospel of zero accidents and injuries was born out from a genuine desire to keep people safe. As stewards of people in what can be a dangerous line of work, it is our duty to set the bar high; however, the pursuit of zero can inadvertently create a culture of silence that encourages sweeping injuries under the rug.

The TRIR Trap

To understand why "zero" can be a trap, let's consider how we currently measure safety success. In our industry, the primary scoreboard is total recordable incident rate (TRIR). For those who don't live in the safety office, TRIR is a mathematical formula used to report the number of injuries per 100 full-time employees. Essentially, if you have a TRIR of 2.0, it means two out of every 100 workers experienced a recordable injury over the course of a year. It is a percentage-based snapshot of past failures.

Here's the trap: Say your company hits a target of 0.4. Then what? You set the bar to a more ambitious 0.25. You hit it. You're now considered world-class. But you're still not perfect. Do you keep pushing toward zero — toward perfection? Imagine yourself in the field: As day after day your team inches closer to zero, wouldn't you hate to be the one who ruined the streak over a tweaked back? If a manager's bonus is tied to TRIR, what might cross their mind regarding a fringe injury — one that might be OK with basic first aid but probably warrants an urgent care visit (and possibly stitches)?

If we train our spotlight too much on zero, we inadvertently send a silent message: We care more about the scoreboard than



A high-energy interaction with heavy equipment is far more likely to result in a SIF than a low-energy incident. Rather than asking for zero injuries, we need to shift our energy to a goal of zero SIFs.

the players. What is measured is managed, and if TRIR is our measuring stick, then that is the standard we will continue to reach for, even if it unintentionally undermines safety efforts. It's time for a better measuring stick.

74,000 Reasons to Pivot

For decades, safety professionals operated based on the "Heinrich's Triangle" theory — the idea that if minor incidents at the base of the triangle are reduced, then fatalities at the tip will decrease proportionally. It's a common principle: If you take care of the little things, the big things take care of themselves.

Modern data tells a different story. Preventing a trip over a cord does not necessarily reduce the number of people who fall from a bridge. The hazards that cause a "recordable" injury are often fundamentally different from the hazards that cause a fatality.

Data on U.S. workplaces from the Bureau of Labor Statistics illustrates this disconnect. From 1992 to 2024, TRIR dropped 75% from 8.9 to 2.3. Over the same period, fatalities only fell by 18% from 6,217 to 5,070. If Heinrich were right, the number of fatalities in 2024 would have been 1,600. Expanding that logic back to 1992, almost 74,000 people would have gone home to their families who instead became workplace statistics.

In other words: Although we are reaching world-class TRIRs and better managing the little things, the big things remain.

3 Things to Do Right Now

There is no single way to pivot away from the traditional zero goal, but here are three considerations to help you move the needle, plus tangible "springboard tasks" you can implement quickly.

1. Focus on SIF Prevention & Hazard Mitigation

Rather than obsessing over the total number of injuries, we must retrain our spotlight onto the proactive mitigation of serious injuries and fatalities (SIFs). Think of your safety energy like a budget. You likely say "no" to three good projects to say "yes" to one that keeps operations running. That is just good business. We need to bring that same pragmatism to safety.

We have a finite amount of human capital, the focus and energy of our crews. If we focus on an all-encompassing "zero," we spend a disproportionate amount of that precious budget on the small stuff. In practice, this means shifting focus toward energy-based safety. A high-energy interaction with heavy equipment is far more likely to result in a SIF than a low-energy incident. Rather than asking for zero injuries, we need to shift our energy to a goal of zero SIFs.

This isn't about shelving minor injuries until the "big ones" are cured; it's a recognition that SIF prevention is a persistent, proactive discipline of hazard control, not a finish line we cross once and walk away from. People make mistakes, and we must ensure our systems are robust enough to handle those mistakes without catastrophic outcomes.

Approach your safety strategy with strategic discipline: Allocate your focus proportionate to the potential severity of the hazard. We still care about every injury, but we prioritize the controls that prevent life-altering events.

The springboard: Take your last three years of injury and near-miss data. Evaluate the potential rather than the TRIR. Ask: "Regardless of the outcome, which of these could have resulted in a SIF?" Focus your next safety committee on those potential SIFs.

2. Measure the Presence of Safety, Not the Absence of Accidents

Imagine your worksite has hit a milestone: three years without a recordable injury. That number provides comfort and pride, but it may be a dangerous illusion. Research confirms there is no statistical correlation between a low TRIR and the absence of a SIF. History is full of organizations that suffered catastrophes on the heels of their longest injury-free streaks.

Looking back at yesterday is insufficient to understand our risk tomorrow. We need leading indicators that measure the presence of safety, not just the absence of incidents. This includes things like near-miss reporting (are we hearing about close calls?), safety improvement suggestions (how many hazards are identified and fixed before tasks begin?), and stop-work authority (are people psychologically safe enough to use it?).

These key performance indicators (KPIs) are messier and more human than a "clean" TRIR. But to measure safety culture, which is the strongest predictor of performance, we must measure things like trust and willingness to speak up. These metrics measure engagement and what is actually going on at our worksites. With leading data, we can make meaningful improvements before someone gets hurt rather than relying on a lagging (and potentially misleading) zero.

The springboard: Evaluate or launch a near miss/good catch program. If you have one, audit the reports for quality rather than just counting submissions. If you don't, talk with leadership about starting one and defining what it should look like. In either case, treat a high volume of reports as a victory for engagement and trust, not a sign of failure.

3. Don't Let Data Speak for Itself

Data is a character in your company's story, but it is often an unreliable narrator. As you move toward transparency and engagement increases, your reported incident numbers may go up. Do not let this "bad" number speak for itself without context. Stay disciplined and calm; help your leadership avoid a knee-jerk reaction when the data doesn't look as expected. If you panic or punish when numbers rise, you will instantly kill the trust you've worked so hard to build and drive your team back into a culture of hiding.

When reporting your data, address any jumps in incidents up-front and frame them through the lens of your cultural shift. An increase in low-severity or "fringe" injuries is not a failure, nor does it signal that your site is suddenly less safe. Rather, it is an indication that your culture is improving and things previously hidden are coming into the light. Remind your team that the scoreboard looks different because you are trading the illusion of perfection for the reality of a safer, more informed workplace. After all, the goal isn't to have nothing to report; it's to have nothing to hide.

The springboard: At your next all-hands, recognize an employee who reported a fringe injury. Thank them for the transparency. Show your team that you value the information more than an unbroken streak.

Using the North Star as Intended

Acknowledging the impracticality of zero injuries is not a concession of defeat. It is a shift in perspective to a more pragmatic approach to safety, because to err is human.

In navigation, the North Star is not a destination; it is a bearing. A sailor doesn't try to reach the North Star in the same way they do not try and reach a lighthouse. Rather, they use the fixed light as a reference to safely navigate the shoreline. If you sailed to a lighthouse, you would crash upon the rocks. Similarly — and in our industry, literally — if we "sail" toward zero, we too may crash upon the rocks.

Embrace zero as your safety bearing. Keep it in sight to ensure you are navigating effectively, but do not fixate on it so much that you lose sight of the biggest hazards right in front of the ship.

Libby Pritchard is a consultant and keynote speaker specializing in human-centric safety and conflict management. With two master's degrees and 15 years of industry experience, she delivers tailored mental health programs, critical soft-skills leadership workshops, and workforce development solutions across the construction materials and mining sectors.

VALTIR

We Offer Water Fillable Barricades for Projects Large or Small.

- Transportation & Passenger Rail Terminals
- Data Centers & Warehouses
- Airports
- Rental Car Facilities
- Parking Garages
- Special Events



Yodock® 2001

Aerocade® Airport Barricade

Yodock® 2001MB





WWW.VALTIRRENTALS.COM

888.496.3625

Scan for More Info



Photo Credit: Nick Striegel

Your Manual to Effective Truck Loading

Increase wheel loader efficiency

BY CARTER GIBBONS & ERIC MAYFIELD

From operator technique to material density, multiple factors determine how efficiently a wheel loader loads trucks. However, two critical components — the trucks' position relative to the loading face and how well the operator fills the bucket — significantly impact efficiency.

Why is it critical to maintain loader efficiency? Even minor losses in loader efficiency can be costly.

Consider a 3-cubic-yard loader loading material from a loose stockpile into 9-cubic-yard trucks. The operator should complete the cycle — filling the bucket, dumping it into the truck and returning to the face — in 30 seconds, fully loading the truck in three passes. Assuming 50 minutes of operation every hour, 133 truckloads should be moved in a morning.

Now, suppose cycle time increases by only 20%, adding six seconds to each pass. You move 111 truckloads in four hours, 22 fewer trucks, leaving nearly 200 cubic yards on the pile.

Conversely, if the operator reduces cycle time by just one second to 29 seconds, under the same circumstances, that operator will load five more trucks, moving an additional 45-cubic-yards of material than with a 30-second load cycle.

Filling a bucket to 100% of its rated capacity is key. If the operator can only manage 85% bucket fill, it will take more than three passes but less than four, impacting efficiency.

Match the Loader & Bucket

"Two places to start to boost efficiency are matching the loader to the trucks and the bucket to the material," said Carter Gibbons, senior product demonstrator and instructor for Caterpillar. "For on-highway trucks, filling the truck in two to three loader passes is optimal."

Many do a good job matching the loader to the trucks to get this pass-match, but selecting the right bucket is just as critical. Factor in the density of the material being loaded. "Clean highway chips weigh less than base material," said Gibbons. "So, often, companies will average the weight of materials loaded to select a bucket."

However, this can sacrifice production and efficiency for convenience. "Loader manufacturers are offering payload overload prevention technology that enables customers to use a large enough bucket to achieve target pass-match across a density range without introducing the risk of overload. When an overload value is exceeded, the lift arms will either slow or stop," mentioned Gibbons.

Filling the Bucket

Start flat on the loading floor to fill the bucket and not from a couple of feet off the

floor, as the lower third of the loader's lifting range is where the machine is most efficient. Most loaders have a return-to-dig setting that enables the operator to set the lower hoist kickout to a preset height to where the bucket returns. When loading sized material from a stockpile, be careful not to drop the bucket to the ground too soon to avoid contamination of the stone with material off the loading floor.

Go into the pile with the bucket parallel to the floor, and as forward progress begins to slow, just before the tires begin to spin, boom up to transfer weight to the front tires. Keep hoisting while curling and, when curled back all the way, the bucket should be loaded.

The key is to keep the bucket moving through the face to keep filling it. Curling the bucket before booming up accelerates wear on the bucket's heel. Alternatively, continuing to crowd the pile with the transmission serves only to rob hydraulic power, and the hydraulics begin to stall. "The bucket should be loaded by the time the loader arms are halfway through their range of travel, or about parallel to the ground," said Gibbons.

Truck Spotting

The wheel loader operator plans the best way to bring in the trucks and work the material face, taking control of the loading area and spotting trucks for the best production. Hoist the filled bucket over the spot where you want the dump body, and have the truck driver back underneath the bucket to improve loading safety.

Spot trucks as close as possible to where the loader is working, at a 30-degree to 45-degree angle to the loading face. The loader should be able to approach the loading face squarely, back away from the loading face, change direction and drive forward to the dump box, arriving with less than a 5-degree angle in its articulation joint. Caterpillar recommends only about 1.5 revolutions of the loader's wheels on each side of this tight V-shaped pattern.

Working from left to right, keep truck drivers on the same side of the truck as the loader to not back into the loading zone on their blind side. Open a space in the face against one end and then back the second truck, and all those following, into the hole created. "If there's a conveyor building the stockpile, take care not to put the trucks in a position where material can slough off the pile onto them," advised Eric Mayfield, senior product demonstrator and instructor for Caterpillar.

Truck placement can be more challenging on construction sites, since there might be material piles scattered about and due to the different types of trucks being loaded. Tractor-trailer combinations can be harder to back into position, so it's better to pull trailers through between the face and the loader.

If the operator doesn't have radio communication with the truck, they'll have to rely on hand signals and horns. "If necessary, stop briefly and talk to truck drivers to get things set up at the face. The right planning will help make up that time," added Mayfield.

Truck Loading

Never back up a wheel loader without looking behind first. Setting the boom-height kickout to hoist the bucket high enough to make the dump automates the boom function, so you can concentrate on backing and maneuvering the machine safely.

Camera technology has evolved significantly over the years to increase safety when operating in reverse. Many loaders will include cameras offering 360-degree views around the loader. Rear object detection uses radar to give the operator visual and audible alerts, based on loader speed, when those objects enter a safety proximity zone.

Operators must know how many buckets it takes to fill each truck being loaded and where to place those buckets. Center the load right to left and distribute it evenly from front to rear, especially on highway trucks, as the Department of Transportation closely watches axle splits.

Choose travel routes for load-and-carry operations carefully, preparing them to prevent spillage and carry the load as low as possible in transit. If equipped, the loader's ride control helps improve smoothness and material retention over rough terrain.

Efficiency-Boosting Technology

Some newer loader models are equipped with technology that automates the most difficult segments of the loading process, improving efficiency for both new and experienced operators. The systems start the load cycle as soon as contact with the pile is detected. Tires are automatically set to help maintain traction, reduce tire spin and support consistently high bucket-fill factors.

Payload technology simplifies machine operation by offering precise bucket load information with on-the-go weighing to help prevent over- or underloading. "This technology also features manual or automatic tip-off assist to help optimize the final bucket process and maximize efficiency," said Mayfield.

Coaching to Perfection

Consider options like on-board operator coaching videos that loader manufacturers are beginning to offer to improve machine operating techniques. These valuable systems monitor technique aspects — both basic elements and lesser-known best practices. When an improper machine operation technique is observed, a corrective action is offered.

Carter Gibbons is senior product demonstrator and instructor for Caterpillar.

Eric Mayfield is senior product demonstrator and instructor for Caterpillar. Visit cat.com.



Photo Credit: tampatra- adobestock.com

Sustainable Materials Are a Smart Strategy, Not Just an Environmental Obligation

What construction leaders are missing

BY MICHAEL ZIMAN

For many construction leaders, sustainability still sounds like a compliance conversation. It's associated with regulations, certifications, added documentation and, most of all, added cost. But that framing is outdated. In today's market, material selection is less about environmental virtue and more about long-term performance, risk management and operational efficiency.

That means contractors who continue to treat sustainable materials as an optional upgrade may be overlooking a strategic advantage.

Reframing Sustainability for Construction Leaders

One of the most persistent misconceptions in the industry is that sustainable materials automatically mean higher up-front costs. When priced against traditional alternatives, some products may appear more expensive at the point of purchase. But that's often where the analysis stops. Unfortunately, that means you're ignoring the life cycle value.

A material that costs slightly more up-

front but lasts three times as long, requires less maintenance and reduces operating costs isn't a premium product — it's a better investment. Yet many contractors still evaluate materials primarily on bid competitiveness rather than long-term performance.

Another misconception is that "green" equals niche. In reality, many sustainable materials today outperform conventional options in terms of durability, resilience and efficiency. The conversation has shifted from sacrifice to superiority.

The building industry also faces increasing scrutiny for its environmental impact. Construction remains a significant contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions. While environmental stewardship may not be every contractor's primary motivator, market forces are pushing the industry in that direction. Clients are asking questions. Regulations in states such as California, New Jersey and New York are accelerating product innovation. Manufacturers are responding accordingly.

The result: Sustainable materials are becoming mainstream — and strategic.

Why Material Decisions Matter More in Today's Market

The past several years have exposed the fragility of global supply chains. Contractors who relied heavily on the lowest-cost international suppliers felt the pain first during COVID-related disruptions and now with tariff volatility.

In response, many firms began prioritizing materials sourced closer to project sites. That shift wasn't only about logistics; it was about reducing exposure to geopolitical risk, transportation delays and cost swings. As a benefit, regional sourcing often reduces environmental impact.

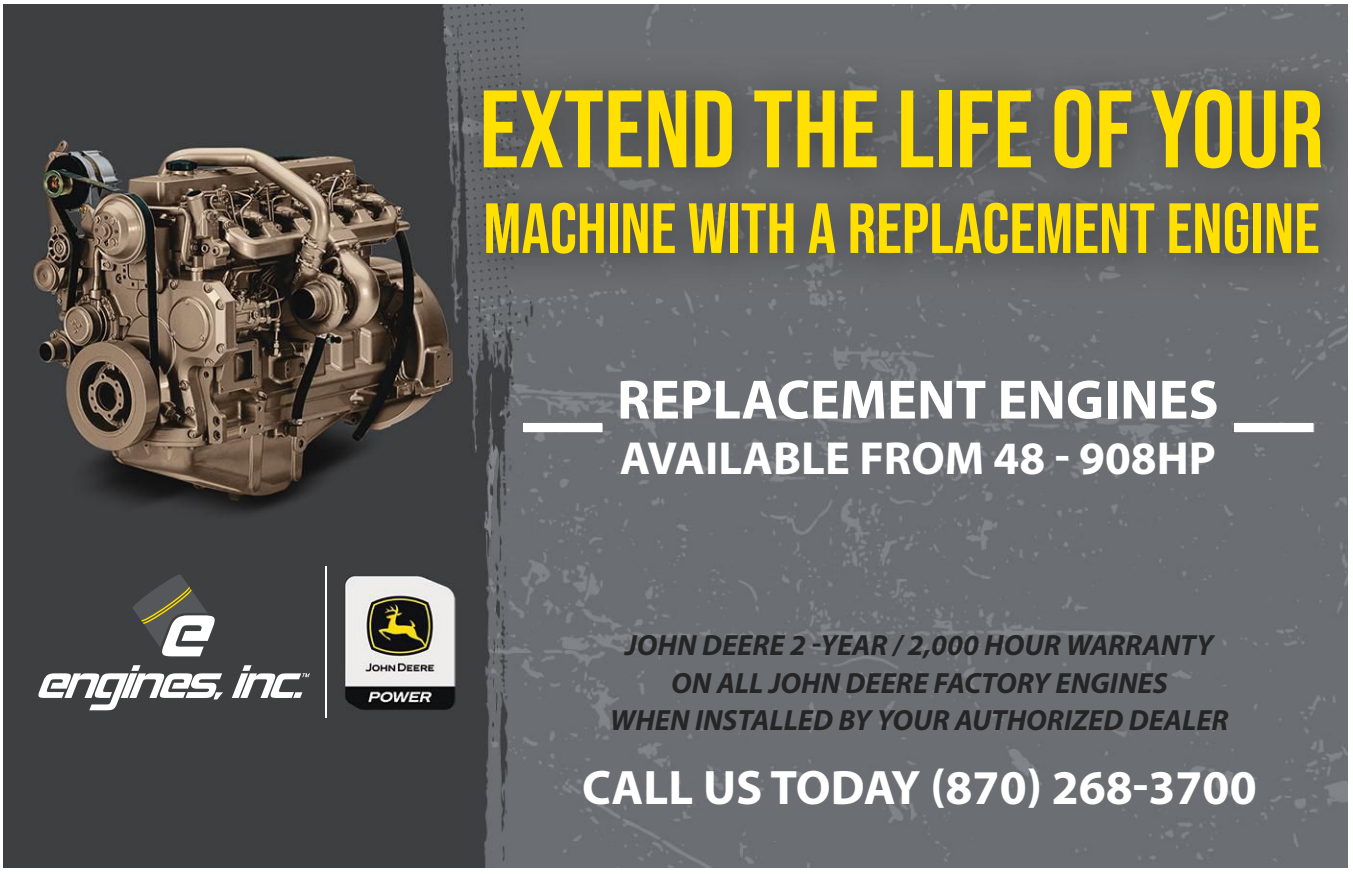
This broader evaluation reflects a maturing approach to procurement. Today's material decisions must account for the following:

- Life cycle cost
- Maintenance burden
- Energy performance
- Insurance implications
- Regulatory exposure
- Supply chain reliability
- Long-term client value

Up-front price is still important, but now it's no longer the only metric that matters.

How Sustainable Materials Improve the Bottom Line

Consider the example of composite decking made from recycled materials. It may cost more than traditional wood, but it can last 30-plus years instead of 12 to 15. Over a multi-decade horizon, that



translates into fewer replacements, less labor, reduced material waste and lower maintenance expenses.

The same principle applies to high-efficiency HVAC systems paired with tighter building envelopes. Improved air sealing, better insulation and smarter system design dramatically reduce energy demand. Over a 15- to 20-year period, savings on utility costs can far exceed the initial premium.

For developers who build to hold properties, the math is even clearer. Reducing operating costs directly improves net operating income. With rising energy prices, investments that deliver double-digit percentage returns over a five- to 12-year payback period can outperform many traditional real estate yields.

In that context, sustainability isn't an environmental initiative: It's a capital allocation strategy.

Sustainability as Risk Management

Material selection also plays an increasingly important role in risk mitigation. Resilient design choices, such as elevating structures in flood-prone areas to comply with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) standards, can significantly reduce long-term exposure to weather-related losses. Improved envelopes not only lower energy consumption but may also limit fire spread by reducing oxygen infiltration.

Insurance carriers are paying closer attention to building performance and resilience. As climate-related events increase, contractors who understand how materials affect insurability and loss prevention will be better positioned to advise clients.

Viewed through this lens, sustainable materials are not just about carbon footprint: They are about protecting assets.

Where Builders See the Fastest ROI

Contractors interested in integrating sustainability without overhauling their entire process can start with categories that deliver measurable returns.

- *Building envelope* — Air sealing, improved sheathing and higher-performance insulation often deliver immediate gains. A tighter building reduces electric and gas consumption for the life of the structure.
- *Mechanical systems* — High-efficiency HVAC equipment continues to improve in performance while drawing less energy. When paired with smart controls, the payback can be compelling.
- *Smart technologies* — Devices such as smart thermostats and automatic water shut-off systems can pay for themselves quickly while reducing risk exposure.
- *Solar integration* — In many markets, solar installations now carry payback periods under 10 years, particularly when incentives are available.

The key is not to attempt a complete operational transformation overnight. It is to identify areas where performance gains and cost savings align.

Misconceptions That Cost Builders Money

I've found several persistent assumptions continue to hold contractors back:

- **"Sustainable always means expensive."** Life cycle analysis frequently proves otherwise. A modest up-front premium can generate decades of savings.
- **"Clients won't pay for it."** In higher-end markets, clients increasingly expect sustainability. Even in older-skewing demographics, where only a portion may proactively ask about green initiatives, they respond positively when educated about performance benefits.
- **"Green materials are harder to source."** As regulations and demand increase, manufacturers are scaling production. Many high-performance products are now widely available.
- **"It complicates the build process."** In many cases, sustainable alternatives can be installed similarly to traditional materials. The greater challenge is knowledge, not logistics.

However, builders who invest time in understanding product differences are better equipped to communicate value and differentiate themselves.

Client Expectations & Competitive Positioning

Clients research materials before preconstruction meetings. They recognize brand names associated with innovation and efficiency. They ask about battery storage, high-performance glazing and long-term operating costs.

In my experience, luxury markets in particular are embracing the idea that the "best" product is also the most efficient and resilient. Sustainability is increasingly associated with innovation rather than compromise.

For contractors, this means two things: technical literacy matters more than ever, and being proactive beats playing catch-up.

Firms that can clearly articulate why one system outperforms another will build trust and command stronger margins.

Practical Takeaways for Contractors of All Sizes

Independent contractors and smaller general contractors may not have the purchasing power of large national firms, but a competitive advantage does not require scale. It requires a mindset.

Start by evaluating materials based on long-term outlook rather than speed and lowest initial cost. Stay current with technological advances. Test new products selectively. Track performance outcomes.

Even incremental improvements, such as better air-sealing techniques or upgraded insulation, can meaningfully differentiate your work.

How to Start Without Overhauling Everything

Adoption does not require a complete strategic reset. Contractors can begin with manageable steps outlined below.

Step 1: Conduct a life cycle comparison. Evaluate one commonly used material against a higher-performance alternative.

Step 2: Focus on the exterior envelope. Improving insulation and air sealing often delivers the strongest energy reduction per dollar invested.

Step 3: Integrate high-efficiency mechanical systems. Pair better envelopes with smarter HVAC solutions.

Step 4: Educate clients proactively. Present options with clear return on investment (ROI) projections and maintenance comparisons. Incremental evolution builds internal expertise while reducing risk.

Looking Ahead

Sustainable material selection is likely to become standard business practice rather than a differentiator. As products that are efficient, resilient and environmentally responsible are recognized as "best in class," client demand will normalize their adoption.

Contractors who act early can shape the conversation. Those who wait may find themselves responding reactively to regulatory mandates and client expectations.

Sustainability, when properly framed, is not about compliance. It is about durability, performance, risk reduction and long-term profitability.

For construction leaders focused on running better businesses, that makes it less of an environmental obligation and more of a strategic imperative.



Michael Ziman, a custom homebuilder and luxury home remodeler, is the president and owner of Ziman Development, which has been operating on Long Beach Island, New Jersey, since 1998. A University of Michigan Ross School of Business graduate, he has overseen more than 200 coastal home projects, and he champions life cycle-driven material selection, resilient design and sustainable building practices. Visit zimandevelopment.com.

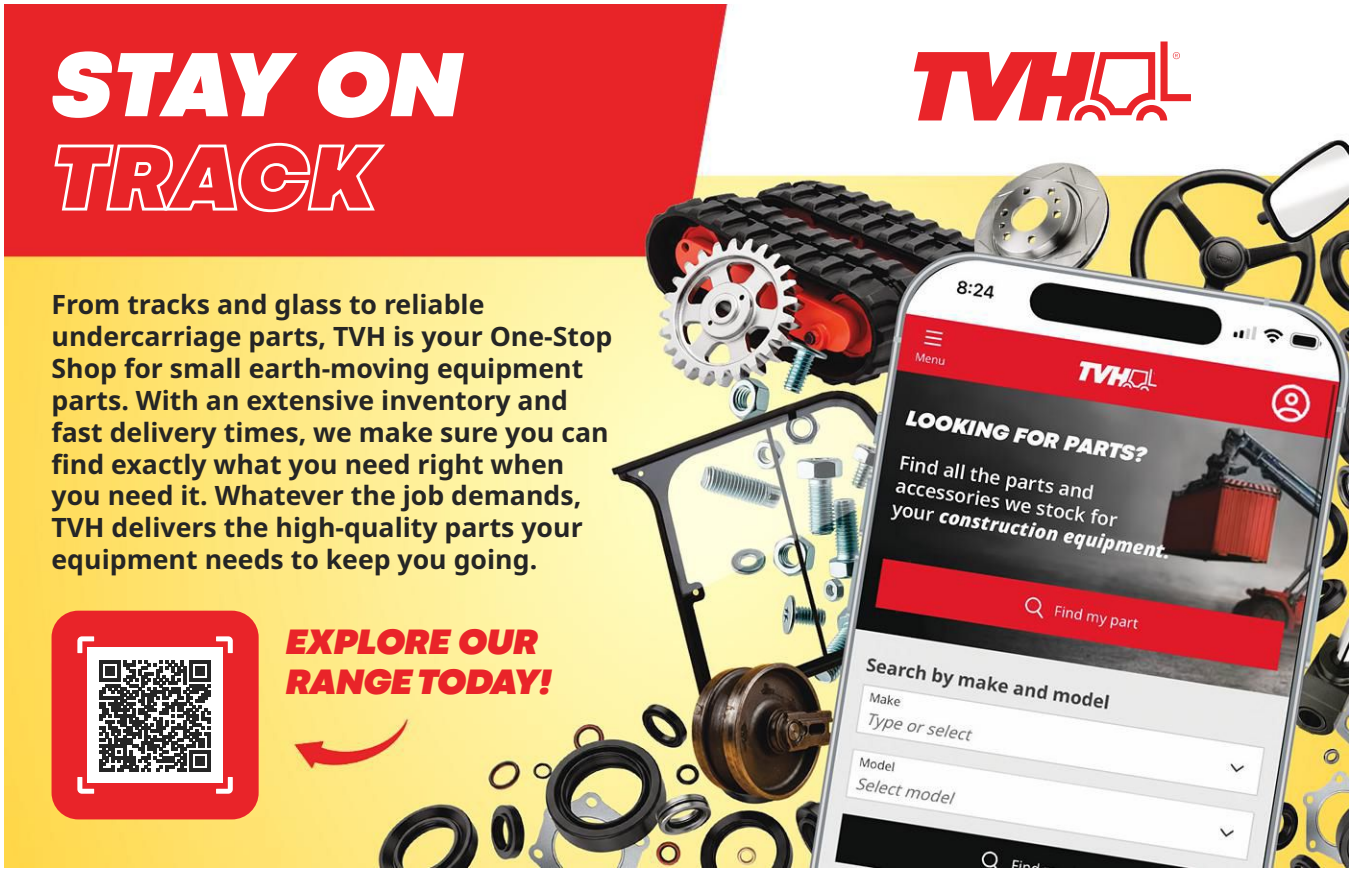




Photo Credit: Panasonic Connect North America

From the Office to the Jobsite

Driving productivity with rugged computing technology

BY MICHAEL TRAFTON

The construction industry finds itself at a pivotal moment. It faces increased pressure to complete high-demand builds with competition for resources and talent a consistent consideration. The expansion of data center builds and the movement toward technology-forward environments, for example, are changing the game in real time for how contractors manage and coordinate work.

At the center of any jobsite navigating these challenges are effective communication and collaboration — along with more productive ways to capture, access and share data across the business. Whether it is a project manager ensuring materials are shipped and allocated correctly or a team tracking overall progress against plans, having reliable mobile access to information while in the field or on the site is vital to operations.

As more jobsite systems move to cloud-based platforms and Internet of Things (IoT)-enabled infrastructure, field teams are increasingly reliant on mobile devices to bridge the gap between physical work and digital coordination. But the rigors of a jobsite mean these technologies must live up to different working standards.

Connecting Systems in a Digitally Enabled Construction Site

Construction environments are becoming more digitally dependent and increasingly fast-paced. Data shows that digital workflows, incorporating building information modeling (BIM) and 3D printing, for example, enable more accurate project planning, limit rework and hasten build completion, with up to 20% reduction in timelines.

In these scenarios, information can move instantly between individuals and teams, giving greater live visibility into operations, equipment and progress.

However, when it comes to viewing systems and platforms in the field via a laptop or tablet, a consumer-grade office laptop or tablet isn't built to withstand the environmental and usage demands

of a construction site. Here, device interruptions delay communications, disrupt access to project files and slow down work — which all set projects back.

High-performing, purpose-built technology designed for the rigors of construction is essential, from heavy machinery to security cameras. Computing devices, which are now central to operations, shouldn't be any different.

Rugged Computing Is Not Optional on the Jobsite

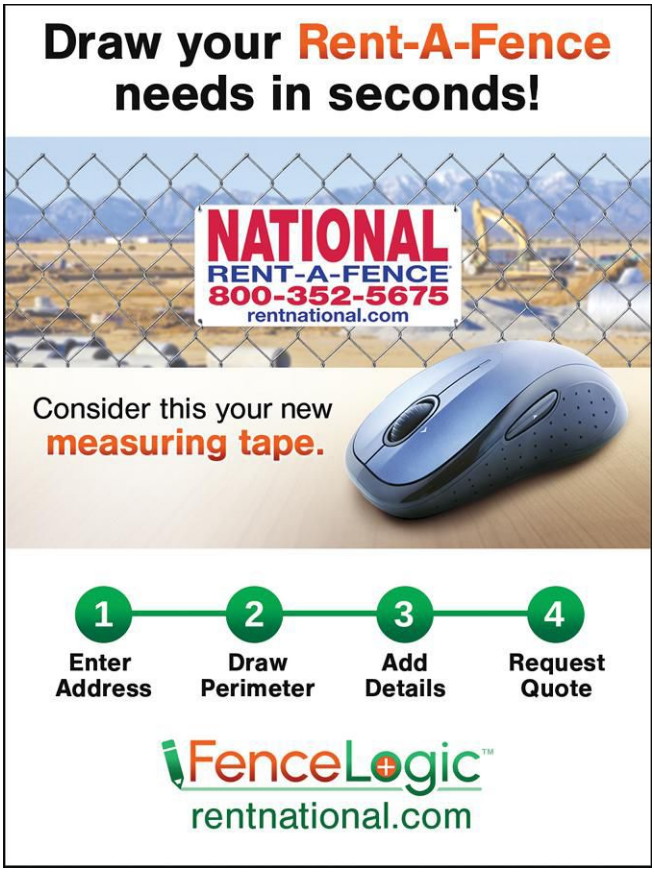
Construction workers need devices that perform consistently in the field, not just in controlled settings, because every technological failure represents lost time that could have been spent advancing the project. When devices fail on-site, crews can lose access to project files, encounter communication delays, and waste time troubleshooting and replacing equipment.

Rugged computers, specifically laptops, 2-in-1s and tablets, are designed to operate reliably in demanding construction environments where consumer devices struggle to perform. Features such as reinforced, durable housings and sealed components are standard so devices can withstand drops, dust, vibration and changing weather conditions. Furthermore, design considerations such as glove touch and high-end brightness means these devices fit within the confines of a construction workflow. If a worker is wearing gloves and viewing information midday in the baking sun, these devices enable that activity without disruption — as opposed to a computer shutting down from overheating or a worker needing to go back to the car to find shade.

Today's rugged technology is not just durable. It is modular, allowing devices to adapt to the changing needs of field

When devices fail on-site, crews can lose access to project files, encounter communication delays, and waste time troubleshooting and replacing equipment.





operations. Expandable ports, connectivity options, additional storage and replaceable batteries allow organizations to configure devices for different jobsite conditions while maintaining the same core hardware platform. These are rugged computing differentiators that are enabled by purpose-built design. This flexibility reduces replacement costs, supports longer device life cycles and minimizes operational disruptions in the field.

How Rugged Computing Enables Contractors Keep Projects Moving

Construction site success is driven by maximizing productivity and the ability to both respond to and anticipate challenges before they disrupt progress. Unfortunately, the construction industry continues to face a well-documented productivity rut, which it is urgently looking toward technology to alleviate.

Productivity is fundamentally tied to the flow of information between jobsite managers and the contractors executing the work on the ground. For field teams, even minor technology disruptions can halt work, delay access to important files or blueprints, impact crew coordination or create communication barriers between teams operating across sites.

In dynamic construction environments, reliable and durable field technology plays a paramount role in pushing projects forward. For example:

- ***Real-time workflow improvements*** — Rugged devices help teams document progress and share updates directly from the field, minimizing the need to return to trailers or office spaces. It also eliminates the need for excessive paper documentation or updating progress at the end of a shift. This allows contractors to work from the most current details, while also eliminating errors and improving worker satisfaction at the end of a busy shift.
- ***Access project files directly from the field*** — Direct access to blueprints, schematics, BIM platforms and project data allows teams to make faster, more informed decisions. Most contractors in the U.S. now use some form of project management platform or BIM, highlighting how deeply digital tools are embedded into construction workflows. It enables construction managers to review digital plans directly from the jobsite when unexpected issues or layout conflicts arise.
- ***Connected tools and diagnostics*** — Rugged computing devices can connect directly to IoT tools, cameras and smart equipment systems, helping teams monitor performance, identify issues and reduce operational disruptions. This could include viewing visual data that is captured through drones or site cameras, assessing real-time safety information (such as personal protective equipment compliance or vehicle movement on and off the jobsite), or even reviewing reports from a prior day's work to identify opportunities to run machines more efficiently. Putting valuable information in the hands of contractors on a jobsite brings new levels of visibility and intelligence to daily decision-making.
- ***Proactive site management*** — Dependable project updates reduce delays caused by reporting bottlenecks, miscommunication between stakeholders and limited field visibility. Instead of reacting to issues after they arise, teams can address problems earlier and keep projects moving forward. For example, are the latest plans being accessed as opposed to older versions? Did the right amount of material show up on time, and is it stored correctly? This reinforces the value of constant access to project information and connected field coordination.
- ***Recruitment and retention*** — Most workers today will expect access to digital tools that make them more productive and efficient at work. This is particularly true for digital natives who have grown up with technology. Contractors that can leverage rugged computing to improve workflows can deliver an improved experience over those that deliver frustration with outdated systems. This leads to higher job satisfaction and can improve brand reputation.

Connected Construction Is Here & Now

Connected construction is no longer a future concept; it is already taking shape on today's jobsites. It reflects a broader trend toward fully integrated construction sites, where technology is embedded in everyday workflows rather than treated as a separate tool. The use of technology to support contractors in completing projects is now a baseline expectation rather than a competitive advantage.

From modular options that support data processing and connectivity needs to the physical durability required to withstand exposure to the elements, rugged computing devices provide capabilities that consumer-grade technology cannot match.

In an industry where delays, downtime and communication gaps can quickly impact schedules and costs, connected rugged technology is foundational to how modern construction firms operate today and into the future.



Michael Trafton serves as a business development manager for Panasonic Connect North America, where he drives strategic initiatives to accelerate enterprise growth. With extensive experience in technology solutions and applications, he focuses on building high-impact partnerships and delivering customer-centric outcomes. His work centers on developing scalable business strategies that enhance both customer engagement and long-term value. Visit connect.na.panasonic.com.

CONSTRUCTION
BUSINESS OWNER



THE BEST IN THE BUSINESS

NOMINATIONS CLOSE SEPTEMBER 4, 2026

Construction Business Owner Magazine is excited to spotlight some of the industry's standout talent with a special section celebrating exceptional women in construction.

From general contractors and CEOs to skilled trades professionals, your nominations help shine a light on the dedicated women driving progress across the industry.

Know someone who's making a real impact? We'd love to hear her story.

Visit constructionbusinessowner.com/owic2026 to learn more and submit a nomination.

OUTSTANDING WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION

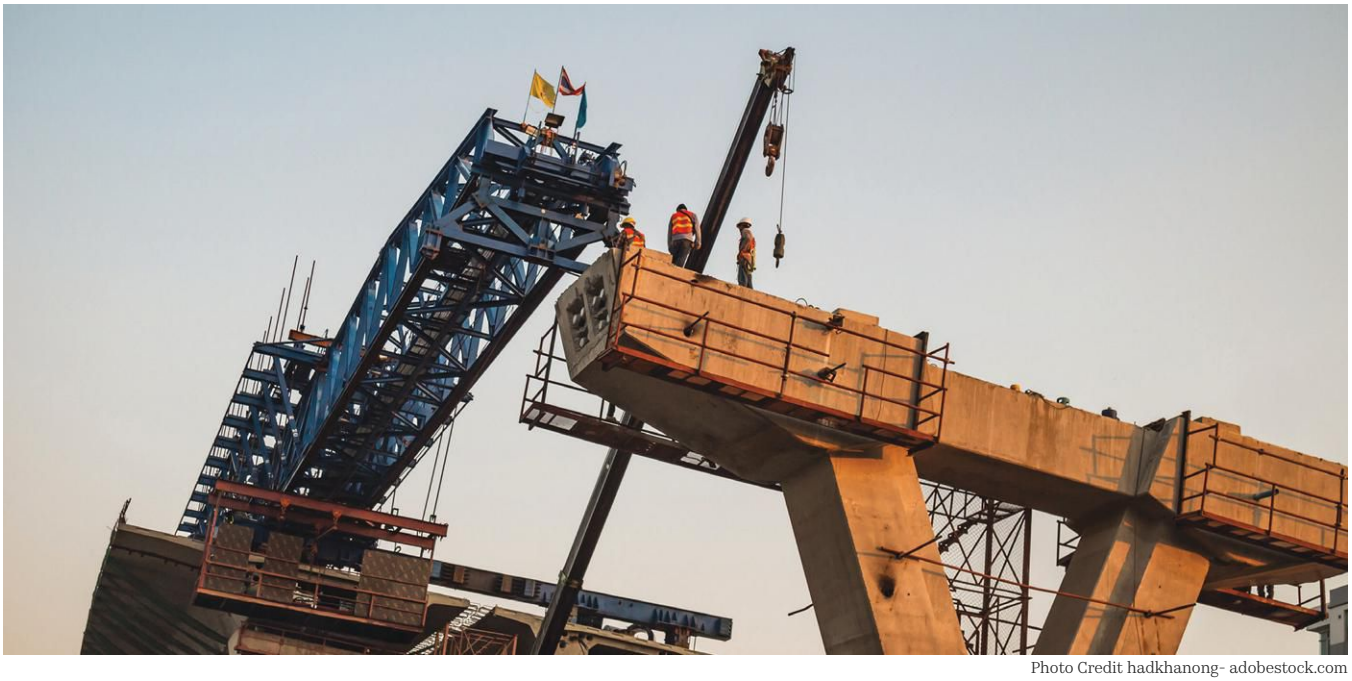


Photo Credit hadkhanong- adobestock.com

Transit-Oriented Development Projects Continue to Reshape American Cities

Digging into major transportation upgrades around the US

BY MARY SCOTT NABERS

One federal funding program continues to support transit-oriented development (TOD) as a strategy to support encourage more ridership, expand housing options and create more connected communities while generating economic vitality for cities. TODs focus on building compact, walkable districts centered around public transit hubs such as rail stations, bus rapid transit corridors and multimodal transit centers. These initiatives are frequently supported by federal, state and local funding programs that prioritize improved mobility, sustainable infrastructure and equitable access to transportation.

When planned effectively, TODs bring together housing, retail, office space and community amenities within walking distance of reliable public transportation. Numerous projects currently underway highlight how this approach is shaping a new generation of infrastructure and real estate development.

Approximately $22.7 million has been allocated for a Freight Street corridor redevelopment project in Waterbury, Connecticut. The project will upgrade a major downtown area for future mixed-use development. The work will include transforming an older, underutilized industrial corridor located near Waterbury's train station.

The project will include demolition work, environmental remediation and infrastructure development. The objective is to deliver a development-ready parcel of land that can support commercial, residential and community-serving uses near the public transit station. When completed, the effort will provide walkable access, housing, areas for community gatherings and retail space. The redevelopment effort will take place on a site where several old buildings have already been removed to make room for the upcoming mixed-use development. Once remediation and site preparation activities are completed, the corridor will be ready for residential housing, retail storefronts, office space and other amenities. The project will also improve connectivity between downtown Waterbury and the adjacent Metro-North rail line. While design and redevelopment planning activities are expected to continue through the remainder of 2026, procurement solicitations are anticipated in 2027.

Officials in Washington, D.C., have announced a plan to transform underutilized Washington Metropolitan Area

Transit Authority property surrounding the Takoma Metro station into a mixed-use, transit-oriented community. The multimillion redevelopment effort will include the addition of housing, retail and neighborhood amenities while strengthening connectivity between the transit station and the surrounding commercial district.

The project will deliver between 430 and 440 multifamily housing units, with at least 15 % of the units designated as affordable housing. The redevelopment will also introduce approximately 15,000 to 18,000 square feet of ground-floor retail and service space designed to connect with the existing Takoma retail corridor. Additionally, the project will create about 1.8 acres of publicly accessible open space, including a retail plaza adjacent to the station entrance and a shared-use path for pedestrians and cyclists. The project is currently in the design phase, with construction expected to begin in 2027.

Officials with the North Carolina Department of Transportation are nearing the final design phase of an estimated $388 million project intended to connect Raleigh and Cary while accommodating increasing travel demand. The initiative is also expected to maximize transit ridership and support development opportunities that include housing, retail and community amenities.

Raleigh officials are simultaneously planning mixed-use development initiatives that will benefit from the expanded transit network. These plans envision walkable districts that incorporate residential and commercial buildings located within convenient access of transit stations. The corridor will ultimately connect to emerging mixed-use developments in Cary.

The bus rapid transit project includes approximately 12 miles between downtown Raleigh and downtown Cary. The scope outlines bidirectional service operating from up to 19 weather-protected transit stations. The project may also include approximately 5 miles of roadway improvements designed to support dedicated bus lanes, as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities. In addition, 10 compressed natural gas buses will be purchased to connect riders to major employment centers, activity hubs and transit-oriented development areas. Construction is scheduled for 2028.

State officials in Maryland are preparing to launch a redevelopment project for the State Center site in Baltimore. The property will be redeveloped as a transit-oriented mixed-use district. The site is located near several transit services, including the State Center Metro Subway station and the Cultural Center light rail station. It is also within walking distance of Baltimore's Penn Station, making it one of the most transit-accessible development sites in the city.

Current planning envisions a walkable district that incorporates a mix of housing, retail space, public gathering areas and green space organized around the existing transit infrastructure. A formal solicitation process is planned for 2027 to select a development partner. Detailed building programs, construction phases and final redevelopment costs will be determined following market engagement and the partner selection process.

Officials with Rock Region METRO in Little Rock, Arkansas, are overseeing a $20 million project to create a redevelopment area centered on the region's primary downtown transit hub. The project is designed to transform the existing River Cities Travel Center site into a mixed-use development integrated with transit services.

The effort will modernize the existing transit center and add development around it that supports both transit riders and surrounding neighborhoods. Proposed project components include multifamily housing, retail and commercial space, community meeting areas, health and wellness facilities, and administrative offices for Rock Region METRO. The redevelopment will be designed to create a walkable mixed-use district. Additional project elements include improved pedestrian connections and upgraded transit infrastructure intended to encourage additional economic development around the transit hub. The project is currently in the planning and feasibility phase, and a construction timeline will be announced at a later date.

A transit-oriented initiative has also been announced for the area near Honolulu's Kūwili Station. The $135 million project is part of a larger redevelopment effort designed to reshape the Iwilei–Kapālama corridor in Hawaii. The initiative will be led by the city and county of Honolulu in coordination with state partners.

State involvement is connected to a broader planning effort that covers approximately 555 acres and outlines roughly $1.6 billion in infrastructure improvements intended to support large-scale redevelopment across the corridor. Planning documents describe a walkable mixed-use neighborhood that could include more than 1,000 affordable housing units supported by retail space, community facilities and new public amenities. Plans also call for new streets that will connect the district to the waterfront and downtown Honolulu, as well as multiuse paths, bicycle facilities and new sidewalks designed to strengthen the pedestrian network. Following completion of design activities, solicitations will be released.

Projects like these illustrate a trend that is expected to grow in the next several years. For companies involved in planning, engineering and construction, these initiatives represent significant upcoming opportunities. As more regions pursue these projects, transit-oriented development will continue to be a powerful catalyst for community revitalization and long-term economic development.

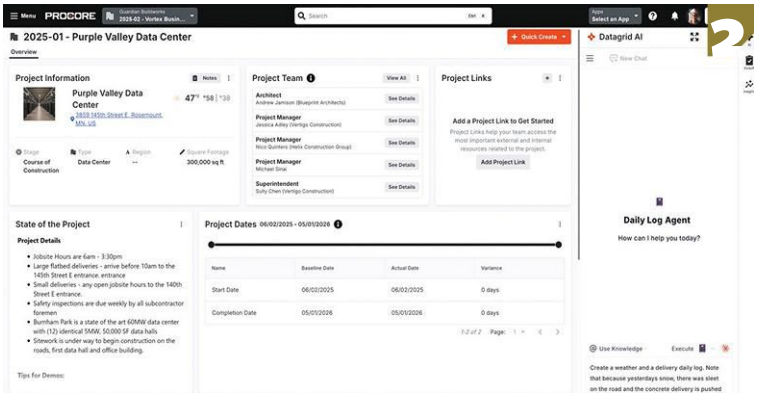


As president and CEO of Strategic Partnerships Inc., Mary Scott Nabers, a former statewide office holder in Texas, has decades of experience in the public and private sectors. Her unique expertise is her success in connecting the two sectors. Nabers is also a well-recognized expert in the P3 world and an experienced business development professional. Visit spartnerships.com.

New Products to Watch

Selected by the editors of Construction Business Owner, these new-to-the-market products are just a few of our favorites recently released to the construction community. Stay tuned in every issue to find out what you need to know about the latest gear, solutions & industry-leading innovations.









WERNER

Werner Harness Portfolio

Released: 5/12/26

Availability: U.S. & Canadian markets

What's new? The new fall protection system simplifies inspection, improves harness identification and enhances all-day comfort across the jobsite. The updated lineup spans Werner's Blue Armor, ProForm and LiteFit harness families and introduces a unified visual safety system, upgraded materials and patented technologies designed to help professionals inspect, adjust and wear their equipment correctly every day.

Specs: The visual safety system introduces consistent, high-visibility cues across the full harness lineup. Each harness features a unified blue-and-yellow design, along with clearly marked components and prominent feature callouts that help pros quickly identify key connection points and safety elements. Integrated colors, symbols, inspection cues and simplified labeling help users understand equipment requirements, verify proper setup and make faster decisions in dynamic work environments.

PROCORE

Procore AI

Released: 5/21/26

Availability: U.S., Canadian & European markets

What's new? Procore AI introduces a new suite of AI agents powered by embedded Datagrid intelligence and built directly into Procore. This new experience gives customers access to agentic AI capable of executing work, coordinating workflows and taking action across projects in real time.

Specs: Unlike traditional chatbots that only answer questions, Procore's agentic AI combines Datagrid's intelligence layer with two new foundational capabilities:

1. Actions: Enable agents to execute live steps inside Procore and connected systems, such as updating records, generating documents and coordinating workflows.
2. Triggers: Enable agents to automatically respond to events in Procore — such as new submittals, RFIs or change orders — based on project context and customer-defined rules.

WEATHER GUARD

Weather Guard Sliding Bed System

Released: 5/28/26

Availability: U.S. market

What's new? The new Weather Guard Sliding Truck Bed System is designed to help contractors and field crews more efficiently access tools, materials and equipment stored in pickup trucks. The heavy-duty sliding platform extends 100% to the tailgate, bringing cargo directly to the user for faster, more ergonomic loading and unloading. Built from heavy-duty steel and rated for payloads up to 2,000 pounds, the system helps improve workflow efficiency while reducing climbing, overreaching and repetitive strain.

Specs: One-hundred percent slide extension provides full tailgate access to tools and materials. Heavy-duty steel platform supports payloads up to 2,000 pounds. Edge-to-edge flat deck with removable side rails and integrated c-channel for customizable cargo organization. Compatible with Weather Guard truck boxes and rack systems. Available in 65-inch and 75-inch models for full-size pickup trucks. Helps reduce climbing, overreaching and awkward lifting.

ERGODYNE

Tool Belt + Suspender system

Released: 5/15/26

Availability: U.S. market

What's new? Engineered to reduce the daily pain points of carrying tools while helping crews meet dropped-object safety demands. Includes padded breathable construction, improved weight distribution and patent-pending pivoting suspender attachments that swivel with worker movement,

Specs: Features ANSI/ISEA 121-2023-compliant tethering points designed to help prevent dropped objects that can cause injuries, equipment damage, downtime and worse.



LOFTNESS

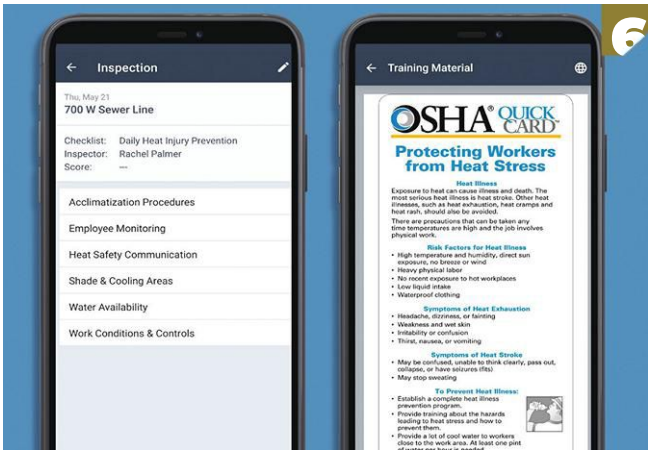
Kwik Cut brush cutter

Released: 5/22/26

Availability: U.S. market

What's new? Loftness has updated its Kwik Cut brush cutter. Featuring a more heavily reinforced housing and floating door, the new model offers greater durability to slice through brush and trees up to 10 inches in diameter. It includes a more rugged floating door with an enhanced hinge design, thicker bracing and reinforced door stop to withstand greater pressure when pushing larger trees.

Specs: Additional steel tubing has been used to increase body strength and stiffen the frame to prevent twisting under extreme pressure. Kwik Cut's heavy-duty, 72-inch-diameter disc is equipped with four dual-edge beveled blades, which are designed to retract on severe impact to protect them and other components from damage. Includes bearing antiwrap protection, a premium strength steel body and disc, and a universal skid-steer mount.



ALIGNOPS BUSYBUSY

Safety Module

Released: 5/21/26

Availability: U.S. market

What's new? This new tool allows contractors to create stronger, more consistent safety processes that are always Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) inspection-ready. This new module helps users create heat-specific jobsite inspections, create daily heat safety job safety analyses, document water and shade station checks, encourage employees to report heat hazards immediately, deliver and track heat safety training, track heat related incidents and near misses, assign and track corrective actions, and centralize everything so they are ready for inspection.

Specs: Ideal for crews working outside in elevated temperatures, including construction, roadwork, roofing, utility work and other demanding outdoor occupations.

NEED FUNDING FOR YOUR NEXT BUILD?
Get approved for
$200K - $5M
construction loans
✓ Multifamily
✓ Single-family
✓ Fix & Flip
✓ Modular
Call today ➡ (435) 557-0412
or visit www.cofilending.com
CoFi LENDING

INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT
ARE YOU A PRO?
Want to see your company's leaders featured in our PROfiles section?
Email Editor-in-Chief Megan Beam at mbeam@cahabamedia.com to share the story of your growing business and its people, practices and strategies.

BRAND IT.
PROMOTE IT.
GROW YOUR BUSINESS.
APPAREL
PROMO
DISPLAYS
SOLUTIONS
AZ CAP Co
On Brand. On Time. From A to Z.
azcap.co
(928) 636-7643

SCHWEISS
DOORS
HYDRAULIC – OR – BIFOLD
ONE-PIECE DOORS
STRAP LIFT DOORS
507-426-8273
SCHWEISSDOORS.COM

TWO WAYS TO TAKE ON THE WORKDAY



Find the loader that fits your work style

Explore Bobcat Classic and Pro loaders and get the machine that's right for your crew.

Bobcat

Bobcat Company is a member of the Doosan Group. Doosan is a global leader in construction, grounds maintenance and material handling equipment, power and water solutions, and engineering that has proudly served customers and communities for more than a century. Bobcat®, the Bobcat logo and the colors of the Bobcat machine are registered trademarks of Bobcat Company in the United States and various other countries.
©2026 Bobcat Company. All rights reserved. | 26819

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS OWNER

ADVERTISER INDEX

Advertiser Name.....Page

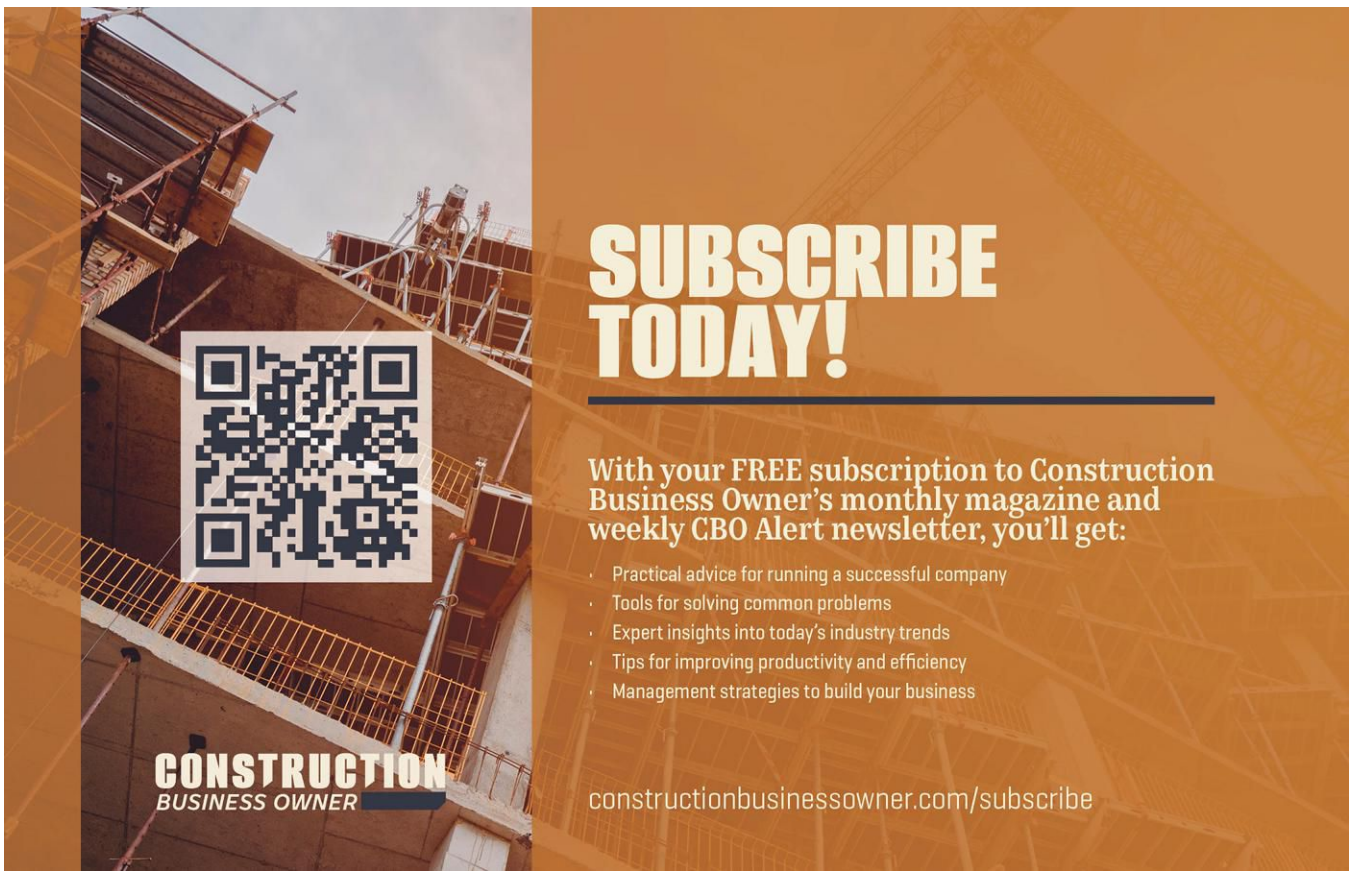
Arizona Cap.....45
Bitco Insurance.....15
Bobcat Company.....46
Board of Certified Safety Professionals.....IBC
CoFi.....45
eMars Inc.....17
Engines, Inc.....35
Foundation Software.....BC
National Construction Rental.....39
OnSite Health and Safety.....39
Progressive Commercial Auto Insurance.....IFC
SAFE Project.....19
Schweiss Doors.....45
TVH/MinnPar.....37
Uline.....21
United Rentals.....1
Valtir.....31

PRODUCT INDEX

Company Name.....Page

AlignOps BusyBusy.....45
Ergodyne.....44
Loftness.....45
Procore.....44
Weather Guard.....44
Werner.....44

*This ad index is furnished as a courtesy, and no responsibility is assumed for incorrect information.



STATS

Annual Value of Construction Put in Place

April 2024/2025/2026 Annual Rate Comparison

This chart compares the two previous years' total value of construction put in place to an annual forecast based on April 2026 figures. (Millions of dollars. Totals may not add up perfectly due to rounding.)

$2,172,397

APRIL 2026 TOTAL ANNUAL VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION PUT IN PLACE

	2024	2025	2026
Total Private Construction	**1,611,908**	**1,638,858**	**1,639,670**
Residential	890,438	892,811	909,880
Nonresidential	721,470	746,047	729,789
Total Public Construction	**487,131**	**513,522**	**532,728**
Residential	11,854	11,782	12,156
Nonresidential	475,277	501,740	520,571
TOTAL Construction	**2,099,039**	**2,152,380**	**2,172,397**

*Seasonally Adjusted Annual Rates. Source: U.S. Census Bureau

"April's economic picture was mixed as employers continued to add jobs, but inflation accelerated as higher energy prices tied to the conflict in Iran drove up costs. While a proposed gas tax holiday could offer some short-term relief, energy prices are unlikely to ease meaningfully until the conflict ends."

Richard Branch, AIA Chief Economist

AIA Architectural Billings Index (ABI)

National			*Regional - Billings				*Sectors - Billings			
Month	**Billings**	**Inquiries**	**Northeast**	**Midwest**	**South**	**West**	**Multifamily Residential**	**Commercial /Industrial**	**Institutional**	**Mixed**
Jan-26	43.8	49.3	42.3	46.3	50.2	46.3	48.4	43.9	46.8	43.4
Feb-26	49.4	52.3	41.9	46.3	50.0	47.2	48.2	45.7	49.2	41.8
Mar-26	49.8	56.8	44.2	49.4	48.5	50.6	50.9	52.5	52.6	40.7
Apr-26	48.3	57.7	47.2	48.0	47.7	49.0	51.5	48.9	51.1	42.5

For more information on the index or to subscribe to the complete historical data going back to 1995 for your internal analysis, please contact economics@aia.org.
The ABI presents monthly construction billings data, using a base score of 50. A score of more than 50 indicates a growth from the previous month, and a score of less than 50 indicates a contraction from the previous month. A score of 50 indicates no change. Source: The American Institute of Architects (AIA), Architecture Billings Index (ABI).

*Regional and Sectoral indexes are three-month moving averages, due to small sample size. All data is seasonally adjusted.
**Every January, the AIA research department updates the seasonal factors used to calculate the ABI, resulting in a revision of recent ABI values.

Build Safer Jobsites. Build a Stronger Safety Culture.

In construction, safety isn't a slogan—it's built into every crew, every task, and every jobsite. Leading contractors trust BCSP to strengthen their safety culture with globally accredited certifications, expert-developed exam prep, and professional development tailored to the demands of construction.

Equip your workforce with the credentials, real-world knowledge, and leadership skills needed to reduce incidents, keep projects on schedule, and deliver work safely—every time.

Equip your safety team with BCSP certifications today.



Josh Himes, CSP, ASP, CHST, STSC

Over 100,000 credentials awarded

BCSP®

BCSP.ORG

WorkMax

Construction Time Tracking Software



WE CAN'T STOP YOUR TODDLER'S MESSES, BUT WE'LL FIX YOUR CONSTRUCTION TIME TRACKING.

- Accurate time tracking with GPS technology
- Seamless data sharing with accounting and payroll integrations
- Eliminate manual entry with digital timesheets

Your crew is completely covered, just like your walls.

See WorkMax in Action!

(800) 246-0800 | workmax.com/cbo