



MITA Safety and Workforce Development

Safety Training

Change is something that most people avoid because they are comfortable with the status quo and the old adage: "If it ain't broke, why fix it?"

Safety training has been and will continue to be a staple of MITA. MITA keeps up with the ever changing rules and regulations coupled with improvements in technology and equipment, thus saving members time and money.

In 2009 MITA developed a system that allows companies more cost effective opportunities for employee training. These opportunities came in the form of regular classes being held in the

MITA Training Center. With classes posted on www.mi-ita.com, and running all year round, employers are now able to send workers to necessary training in a timely manner. As always, MITA staff also traveled to many individual companies to deliver training classes.

MIOSHA Consultation Education and Training awarded MITA a grant in 2009 to assist with the training needs of the heavy construction industry. The grant was aimed at helping contractors and workers identify hazards associated with falls and protect them from the number one killer in construction. MITA also promoted Job Site Analysis as a

way to encourage companies to be more proactive and less reactive by planning ahead and identifying potential work place hazards.

Pre-planning to avoid hazards eliminates the potential for workers to take unnecessary risks. Some of the most common excuses heard in the field during 2009 were, "We were only in the hole for a minute;" or, "He was only on the edge of the bridge for a second." It only takes a second for an excavation to cave in or for a worker to fall off a bridge. MITA training emphasized that these types of events can be minimized if not eliminated by planning ahead.

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MITA Engineering Year in Review

As projects and field operations are shutdown for the winter, with hopes that 2010 will bring the economic turnaround our state and industry so desperately need, let's pause and reflect on some of the successes achieved in a year that was politically stressful, economically depressed, yet busy and productive. In maintaining our strong industry voice, and responding to the challenges 2009 brought to our industry, MITA was able to achieve many significant successes and noteworthy accomplishments, which include:

- Continued aggressive advocacy for the **integrity of the competitive bid process** with several local agency jurisdictions that include local preferences or discount factors in their low bid determination. MITA remains steadfast in its position that projects be awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder.
- Successfully negotiated changes to the MDOT administrative rules that govern the **pre-qualification of construction contractors** that extend the pre-qualification renewal cycle for contractors with an overall financial rating greater than \$10 million to two years, and raise the overall financial rating limit that requires an audited financial statement from \$1 million to \$2 million.
- Multiple successes in working with the US Department of Labor (US DOL), the Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth (DeLEG), and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to maintain state and federal wage rate determinations that are current and correct.
- Facilitated and coordinated the industry review of **MDOT's draft 2010 Standard Specifications for Construction**. MITA staff served as the chairperson for six of the nine industry review committees.

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MITA Member Services Keep Growing

MITA member services continued to evolve during 2009. In a declining economy several new stones were turned over in an effort to provide members with the tools they need to be competitive and compliant with regulations.

- The MIOSHA Appeals Service generated significant monetary savings for members by handling over 350 citations on their behalf. This number is an approximate increase of 15 percent from the previous year.

- MITA expanded the BCBSM Health Insurance Program. *My Blue SM* was recently added to the growing list of options. This program is individual coverage directed at self-employed persons, new families or those considering early retirement. The plan may also be just the trick for members trying to maintain benefits for small groups. Please remember that many other options exist regarding access to different types of BCBSM health coverage.

MITA Website Improvements (www.mi-ita.com)

- Safety Literature is an updated page with publications that can be downloaded in PDF format. Some examples are: Best Practices Utility Locating Card, Toolbox Talks, Trench Safety Handbook, Fall Protection Handbook and many others.

- MITA training courses are now posted to the site with registration forms.

- Jobsite Safety Analysis forms can be downloaded to keep you ahead of the curve, put safety on the front end of the job and promote communication between all levels of management.

- 2009 was a big year for social media, such as Twitter, and Facebook. MITA “got in the act” by adding share functions underneath bulletins and Facebook to the media options available to members.

- DBE participation was expanded with website postings of contractor needs for DBE requirements in relation to each letting. Members also gained the ability to reach potential customers via web advertising, which provides links to their current websites or through e-bulletins, which promote upcoming events.

MITA Events

MITA events are the social glue of the organization from the annual trek to Boyne Highlands for the Ski-Weekend, the Management Conference held in Cabo San Lucas to the Summer Conference held at Boyne Mountain. Members gathered at these events to network and learn about what’s happening in our rapidly changing industry. Many contractor members, associate members and industry advocates forged new relationships or rekindled old ones while enjoying the company of their families.

Clean Diesel

In 2009, MITA and partners from the equipment industry have applied for a federal grant aimed at lowering diesel emissions by bringing aged equipment into compliance with the Diesel Reduction Act. If successful, numerous MITA members will be eligible for engine repowers as well as numerous retrofits and upgrades designed to lower diesel emissions on construction sites.

Results of the submission should be available in February. MDOT and EPA support the grant effort. It is hoped that this will be the first of many successful grant submissions regarding clean diesel initiatives.

Future Leader Development Program

The first group of Future Leaders completed a new, six-day program in 2009, with graduation planned for the MITA Annual Conference in January 2010. Eighteen representatives from various disciplines of heavy construction participated in the program, which will continue in 2010.

Please feel free to contact Rob Coppersmith at rob.coppersmith@mi-ita.com or call the MITA office at 517-347-8336 with any questions or comments.

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\$1 B in Infrastructure Stimulus, Other Legislation Helps Boost Heavy Construction Industry

Despite the Legislature taking the slow road on long-term transportation funding, key legislative successes in 2009 provided a much-needed boost to the industry.

This time last year, MITA was calling for federal stimulus dollars to help rebuild the nation's infrastructure. Ultimately, those efforts were successful, providing over \$850 million in new highway spending and nearly \$250 million in new water and sewer projects to Michigan.

While these new dollars were not the solution to all of the industry's woes, they helped to maintain a sagging economy and sustained thousands of jobs.

Recently Congress also passed a landmark appropriations bill that significantly increased the previous federal commitment for underground construction: \$2.1 billion for wastewater and \$1.38 billion for drinking water, providing roughly \$125 million more in projects for our state this year.

On the state legislative level, MITA continues to press policymakers for a long-term fix to the transportation-funding dilemma. In early December 2009, the industry was successful in getting a Republican-sponsored diesel tax parity bill out of Senate Transportation Committee. MITA is currently working to garner enough support to get the bill approved in the full Senate.

While the Legislature has not been successful in passing the much-needed legislation, in recent months MITA has taken key steps including identifying a handful of both Republicans and Democrats who are willing to sponsor and support funding increases. There are a number of key reform measures currently being debated in a comprehensive package that expands asset management practices, tax increment financing, public-private partnerships and eliminates various funding diversions.

In addition to funding bills, MITA has worked on a series of other bills including a new law that would extend frost law exceptions to utility subcontractors, decrease the bond requirements for unpaid vehicle weight fines and legislation that would limit contractor liability to three years rather than six years under current law.

Lobbying victories are not only measured by those bills that get signed into law, but also sometimes by those bills that do not. MITA has successfully worked to oppose bills that would reduce or eliminate MBT credits used by the industry, including the compensation credit and personal property tax credit. MITA also worked to oppose legislation that would debar contractors from doing MDOT work for even minor violations of MIOSHA or prevailing wage laws.

There are still many things to do on the legislative front and 2010 is shaping up to be the most critical year in recent memory. MITA members are encouraged to continue contacting legislators* and help us set the course for a strong and profitable decade to come.

Please feel free to contact Mike Nystrom at mikenystrom@mi-ita.com or Keith Ledbetter at keithledbetter@mi-ita.com or call the MITA office at 517-347-8336 with any questions or comments.

**MITA members are encouraged to contact their legislators through our automated contact line (888-719-3087).*

Engineering Year in Review

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- Developed/launched MITA Ads, now recognized as the preferred electronic advertisement portal of choice for non-MDOT let projects. MITA Ads is a state-of-the-art website for posting advertisements for bids for categories that include construction projects, professional services and equipment. If you are not a registered MITA Ads user, visit www.mitaads.com.

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Safety and Workforce Development

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MIOSHA Appeals/Enforcement

MITA settled 326 MIOSHA citations on the behalf of members in 2009. That number is up from 264 in 2008. The rise is attributed to two things: more safety officers and greater scrutiny on American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) projects, including night and weekend inspections.

A large number of “joint” inspections involving the Occupation Health and Construction Safety Divisions took place in 2009 with a focus on lead and cadmium related to bridge building and painting. Over all, it was a learning experience for those involved.

MITA continued in 2009 to view every MIOSHA/OSHA/MSHA citation as important because they affect individual companies, and impact the entire industry in one way or another. MITA worked diligently to obtain the best resolution possible for every citation.

Workforce Development

Michigan Construction Career Days (MICCD) brought approximately 2,000 young people to experience hands-on just what it’s like to work construction. In 2009, students

were able to operate just about every piece of equipment that would be on a project as well as hammer nails, pour concrete, lay bricks and make an electrical connection. Many thanks to MITA members who participated in the event.

During 2009, MITA signed a resolution – in conjunction with all the major Michigan construction associations – to create a unified voice for Michigan construction career development. A task force was established to identify needs, goals, outlooks and shortfalls and will develop a plan to build a positive image of construction as a career. Many strong ideas have come from these meetings and MITA looks forward to continuing in the process.

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Engineering Year in Review

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- Worked aggressively with MDOT to ensure electronic contractor inquiries are consistently posted and that MDOT routinely highlight contract changes incorporated by addendum.

- Facilitated a growing partnership with InfoTech for the continued development and enhancement of FieldManager – Contractor, a FieldManager like software application for project management “developed for contractors by contractors.”

- Partnered with MDOT in providing prevailing wage compliance training, and assisted many MITA members in resolving prevailing wage compliance issues.

- Continued focused efforts to establish positive relationships and build rapport with many regulatory and infrastructure owner agencies, and the consulting engineer community through regular interactions with various groups and numerous utility companies.

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