

BREEDING ALPHA DOGS: THE SUPERVISION ROI

By Mark Breslin

There is no industry that so poorly prepares its' managers for the responsibilities they are to assume as does the construction industry.

Recent studies of productivity gains in the private sector (Columbia Graduate Business School) have identified the most significant variables affecting productivity as supervisory competence and technology. Despite this, Labor and Management generally look elsewhere for competitive factors to influence, including CBA's and pricing structure, which are notoriously difficult to deal with.

The upgrading of supervision should be a joint business objective and strategic initiative of contractors and their unions. The construction industry (especially in small firms that make up the majority of signatory contractors in North America) often selects foremen and supervisors based on instinct, gut feelings, or simply lack of other options. Frequently there is no advance training or preparation.

A lead man becomes foreman. A foreman

becomes the superintendent. Sink or swim. Try not to mess it up too badly. That's an expensive learning curve at the company and end user's expense. This is not exactly the best method to grow a modern industry.

Supervisory Development: Minimum Standards

The average independent small business

person in the United States has annual revenues of approximately \$900,000. To survive and make a profit, they must have a basic grasp of the following:

- basic management, motivation and leadership strategies
- personnel and equipment management
- records and documentation risk management and insurance
- communication and correspondence skills
- cost accounting
- customer service and satisfaction

It is not unusual for a construction foreman to have two to five times the dollars noted



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CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

BY STEVE PHILIPP, JR.



by Steve Philipp, Jr.
PDF Chairman

Your PDF has been hard at work to bring more high-quality educational opportunities to you here in St. Louis in order to save you the time and expense of traveling to another city and staying in a hotel. We now have great news to announce: the SSPC has agreed to bring its C-10 and C-11 concrete floor coating classes to St. Louis.

Coating concrete floors is a rapidly growing part of our business, and these two new classes are important resources for learning how to prepare and coat concrete. This is the kind of education we need to keep pace with an ever changing market. I haven't taken these classes yet, but I'm going to take them when they come here.

The C-10 class, "Coating & Surfacing Concrete for Contractor Supervisory Personnel," will be offered on December 3-4, 2007. C-11 "Concrete Coating Inspector Program and Certification," will be offered November 12-17.

C-10 is designed to meet the practical training requirements of SSPC-QP 8 Section 4.4, which require that each job crew chief and each QC manager complete a minimum two-day overview of concrete components, coating and surfacing types, and surface preparation and substrate repair techniques based on SSPC consensus standards.

C-11 is designed to certify concrete coating inspectors in correctly observing, assessing, documenting, and reporting all relevant job data as determined by the specification and referenced documents. Students completing the technician-level training (first four days only) will be qualified to work under the guidance of a certified concrete coating inspector.

We'll send you more information as we get closer to the dates of the classes.

We're also going to bring in NACE Level 2, part of the sequence of classes to get certified in coating inspection. We don't have a date yet.

That's on the technical side. On the business side, we're bringing FMI to St. Louis to provide training on business topics, such as leadership skills, negotiations, getting paid, pricing and bidding strategy, construction selling skills, job profits program, and ownership transfer and management succession.

In addition, we're developing our in-house library of educational materials. We're hiring an editor and a video producer to shoot the new hires DVD we've been working on. It will have several chapters, mine is on operations management, or how to direct people in field to work effectively.

The new hires DVD will fulfill a legal requirement to inform employees of certain legal aspects to our work, and it work comp carriers will be pleased to see a consistent message on safety.

We are still working with Emil DeLuca, director of sales and marketing at *Eagle Insurance*, to save you money on health insurance for owners and office staff, but we need more information from you. We need for more people to fill out their surveys. If you haven't returned your surveys to Emil, please do so.

This year, we plan on marketing our trade in a wider area than we have in the past. We are working on an agreement with *Fox Sports Midwest* to expand the marketing of our member companies and sell our trade to attract new members and apprentices throughout southern Illinois and into part of Iowa.

Lastly, remember our annual golf tournament coming up. Mark May 10th on your calendars and I will see you then at the *Whitmoor Country Club*. □

PDF

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Finishing Touch Winners

The Finishing Touch Awards, sponsored by the Painting and Decorating Foundation (PDF) and St. Louis Construction News & Real Estate (CNR), recognize the skill, dedication, and craftsmanship seen in one of the finest painting and drywall markets in the country.

A total of 15 awards were given at the PDF's annual fellowship dinner for a range of outstanding work in residential, commercial, and industrial settings.

■ Residential Interior Painting

First Place

West Park Painting Co.
Huntleigh Woods

Second Place

PaintSmiths of St. Louis
Private Home

Third Place

Rainbow Painting Co.
Grandview

■ Residential Exterior Painting

First Place

West Park Painting Co.
Huntleigh Woods

■ Commercial Interior Painting

First Place

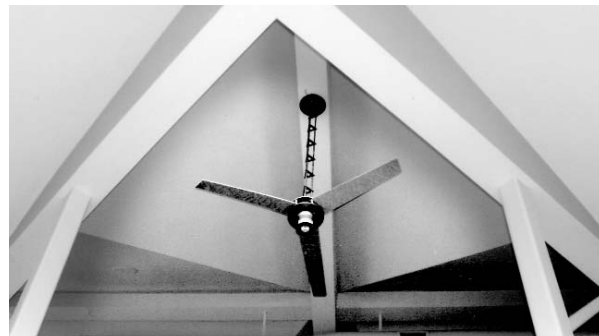
Custom Coatings Inc.
Busch Stadium



First Place Residential Interior Painting, West Park Painting Co., Huntleigh Woods, rear staircase



*First Place Commercial Painting
Custom Coating Inc., Busch Stadium*



*First Place Residential Drywall
River City Drywall, Custom Home*

Second Place

West Park Painting Co.
Mandarin Lounge

Third Place

Primary Colors
First Christian Church

■ Special Effects and Faux Finish

First Place

Koch Brothers Decorating
McDonnell Foyer

■ Industrial Structures

Second Place

Thomas Industrial Coatings
Table Rock Lake Bridge

■ Industrial Buildings

First Place

Thomas
MSD Lower Meramec

■ Industrial Coatings

No First Place

Second Place

PaintSmiths of St. Louis
Second Street Warehouse

■ Commercial Wallcovering

First Place

PaintSmiths of St. Louis
P-556 Enlisted Dining Facility

Honorable Mention

PaintSmiths of Missouri
Paragon Building

■ Residential Drywall

First Place

River City Drywall
Custom Home

Honorable Mention

Chesterfield Drywall
Woodruff Residence

Welcome New Officers

PDCA St Louis Chapter #2 (Painting and Decorating Contractors of America)

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Tim Niedringhaus
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above under their direct responsibility annually, with little or no learning curve adjustment for the significant jump from rank and file member, to company supervisor. They end up managing projects and people and yet possess few, if any, of the above skill sets needed to do it well.

This is weak, shortsighted and symptomatic of the “we don’t have time to do it right” syndrome of contractor personnel development practices in our industry.

Making Supervision THE Priority

Across the vast majority of construction companies, unions, and associations, supervisory training is a relatively recent agenda item that gets superficial attention, but rarely delivers on its’ potential.

I contend there is no one area of investment that can immediately increase union construction market share as supervisory development.

Supervision: Market Recovery NOW

Labor and management are missing an opportunity to recapture their marketplace and even their playing field. This is a result of comparatively little time or money being placed in the development of foremen and supervisors.

Almost every craft offers a foreman training program; but the measure of effective programs should not be their existence but instead:

- how many foremen are being turned out total
- how many foremen are being turned out in ratio to the rank and file total numbers or number of signatory contractors
- how this is being strategically leveraged to benefit the union, the contractors and the end users we are doing business with.

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While hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent on apprenticeship, a tiny fraction of this is being put into supervision, and this is a strategic error that needs rectification immediately.

What is critical to recognize is that these programs will need to be “grass-roots based” at the local or regional level. To make this a key priority we must closely examine the Return on Investment that supervisory training provides to the contractors, union, and end users.

Supervision ROI #1: Increase of Union Contractor Capacity & Satisfaction

The first area for return on investment is for our existing union contractors. The analysis of the value of supervision is as follows:

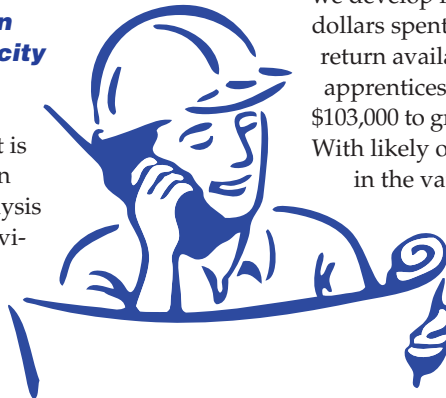
Reduced Strategic Risk:

Union construction capacity is limited by the amount of risk a contractor will take in expanding his company’s size, market or geography. The availability of qualified supervision significantly reduces this risk, leading to increases in existing contractor capacity.

Profit: Money is made or lost in our business based on supervision. No tool provided by the union has more of a pocketbook impact.

Growth: Company growth is nearly always based on building crews around a good foreman and lead man. Most aggressive union contractors would bid more work if they had the capacity to effectively manage it.

Immediate Impact: Union contractors do not usually see a great value in apprentices despite the investment made in the programs. They (unrealistically) want the instantly qualified craftsman. The qualified supervisor is an impact player that starts making an operational difference right away, which is the time schedule the contractor loves.



Future Game Plan: Baby boomer demographics will retire most of the industry’s best supervisors in the next 5-10 years. Being ahead of the curve to develop their replacements keeps the union segment competitive and creates a platform from which to beat the competition.

Supervision ROI #2: Cost to Value Ratio

Training supervisors and foremen is a comparatively low cost endeavor. When we develop ratios for returns on training dollars spent, there is likely no higher return available. It is not unusual for an apprenticeship program to spend \$103,000 to graduate one final apprentice. With likely over 100,000 apprentices in the various systems this is an investment of hundreds of millions of dollars per year.

Imagine spending just five percent of this on foremen and supervisory training. It does not take a professional strategist to see that the per head return on those dollars will be far in excess of anything spent on our “rookies.”

Supervision ROI #3: End User Satisfaction

Poor supervision costs the end user time and money, usually in that order. Most end users recognize this value and can tell when they are paying for a lack of it. Particularly in industrial settings, end users are stuck with asking for “more bodies” rather than a more efficiently run project, to keep up with schedules. This has led to an entirely different set of values related to production on those projects that cease to respond to supervision as the driving factor and more to an expectation of marginal effort at higher costs.

Excellent supervision is another valuable reason for the end user to select union affiliated firms, based on a bottom line analysis. □

MONEY

▲ MANAGEMENT ▼

Fire Your Bad Clients

*Trying to improve your company's bottom line?
If profitability is your goal, it may be time to cut some dead weight.*

By Pam Newman

Got a few bad-egg clients? Maybe you should fire them. That's right—I said "Fire them." Cut them loose. Give them the heave ho. Tell them goodbye and never look back.

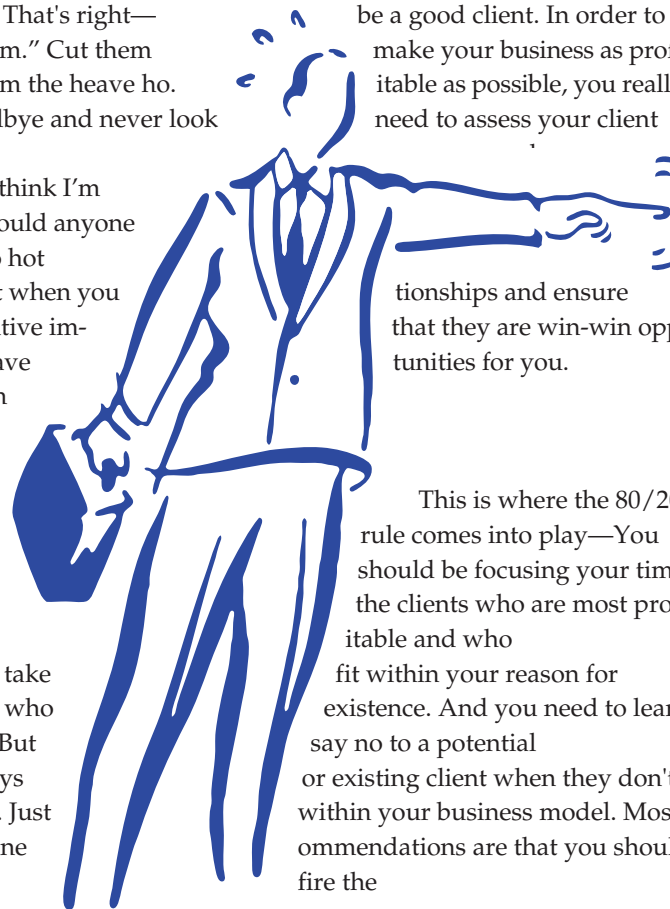
I know you think I'm crazy—why would anyone say goodbye to hot prospects—but when you realize the positive impact it could have on your bottom line, you'll wonder why it took you so long!

As business owners, we often feel that we should take on every client who comes calling. But that's not always the best choice. Just because someone comes to you,

who's interested in a business relationship doesn't mean they're going to be a good client. In order to make your business as profitable as possible, you really need to assess your client

relationships and ensure that they are win-win opportunities for you.

This is where the 80/20 rule comes into play—You should be focusing your time on the clients who are most profitable and who fit within your reason for existence. And you need to learn to say no to a potential or existing client when they don't fit within your business model. Most recommendations are that you should fire the



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bottom 10% of clients (in terms of profitability) each year so you can focus on your more profitable clients with your limited time. Not sure this is the best idea for your business? Here are five types of clients you need to fire who are causing your business to be less profitable:

Focus drainers. In order to make the most of your time, you need to focus on your core competencies. Clients who don't fit within your targeted service or product focus may be costing you money. Have you started offering products and services that aren't a fit with your core business strategy just to keep some clients happy? If that's the case, perhaps you need to reassess whether that's a smart business move.

Low-profitability clients. If you're not generating money (or much money) from some of your customers, then you're on the losing end of a bad relationship. You only have so many hours in the day to work on your business, so make them count. Only work with clients with whom you'll enjoy a good return on your invested time.

Complainers. Ever feel drained at the end of the day because you had to deal with complaining clients who always want something for nothing? It's not worth it! It's time to say good riddance and work with those people who truly appreciate what you do and are willing

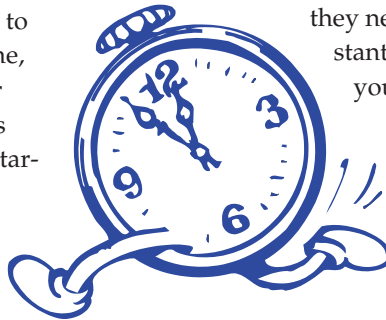
to pay for what you provide without complaining!

"Something for nothing" clients. Get rid of those customers who always want something but don't want to pay for it. They don't value what you have to offer, and you constantly have to justify your prices. If they don't value you now, they never will, and you'll constantly be justifying the work you do and the prices you charge. Only work with those people who understand the value you have to offer and will appreciate it.

Time wasters. If you're spending time with clients who waste your time because they're never ready or aren't willing to listen to your advice, *run now*. These will be the ones that will constantly assume more of your time without providing anything in return and then will wonder why they're paying you. You can't help those who don't help themselves.

As you take a long, hard look at your goals for the year, make sure that one of them is to run your business more efficiently, especially when it comes to managing your money. One of the ways you can do that is to more effectively manage your clients. So look at your customer profitability for 2006, and decide which clients you're going to fire to improve your 2007. It'll be one of the smartest moves you make. □

Pam Newman is Entrepreneur.com's "Financial Management" columnist and



John H Hinrichs PDCA Scholarship Awards Recipients

Six area students, Cory Crump, Nikki Vandeven, Adam Waelder, Matt Kopsky, Amy Singer, and Tiffany Smith have won John H Hinrichs Scholarships from the St. Louis Chapter of the Painting & Decorating Contractors of America. Each student will receive \$1,500 for college education.

Cory Crump is a senior at Fort Zumwalt West in St. Charles County. Cory looks forward to attending college in his home state of Missouri and earning a degree in computer science. Cory is the son of Sue and Terry Crump of O'Fallon, Missouri.

Nikki Vandeven, a graduate of St. Dominic High School, is now attending St. Charles Community College. She intends to transfer into the paramedic program at Florissant Valley Community College after two years at St Charles CC. Michael and Karen Vandeven of O'Fallon, Missouri are Nikki's parents.

Adam Waelder is completing his senior year at Francis Howell High School in St Charles, Missouri. Next year Adam will attend Linn State Technical College in Linn, Missouri. Adam is the son of Mike and Dawn of Defiance, Missouri.

Matt Kopsky, a senior at Christian Brothers College High School in Town and Country, is looking forward to attending the University of Missouri in Kansas City next year where he will earn his degree, along with playing soccer. Michael and Caroline Kopsky of Chesterfield, Missouri are Matthew's parents.

Amy Singer, a junior at Missouri Baptist College, is working on her Bachelors of Science degree and hopes to complete her Masters of Education degree after that. Her parents are Stacey and Maureen Singer of Sunset Hills, Missouri.

Tiffany Smith, a senior at Highland High School in Ewing, Missouri, plans to attend Central Missouri State University and major in accounting. Her long-term goal is to become a Certified Public Accountant and find a well paying job. Tiffany is the daughter of Steve and Alice Smith of La Grange, Missouri.



Winner Matt Kopsky with PDCA President Jeff Smith

HEALTH & SAFETY

Knowing Ladder Safety

Each year hundreds of workers die and thousands more are left with disabilities as a result of workplace ladder accidents. Portable ladders are one of the handiest, simplest tools and are used for many kinds of work. Planning and care are required to ensure their safe use. Since there is no room for error, ladder safety should be everyone's concern—managers, supervisors and workers.

Ladder hazards

Ladder accidents usually are caused by improper selection, care or use, not by manufacturing defects. Many of the more common ladder hazards, such as instability, electrical shock and falls, are preventable. Prevention requires proper planning, correct ladder selection, good work procedures and adequate ladder maintenance.

Good work practices:

- Never hand carry loads on a ladder. Carry tools up or down on a belt or hoist them in a bag or bucket.
 - Wear shoes with clean, nonskid soles.
 - Position the ladder where you safely can reach without losing your balance.
 - Face the ladder while climbing up or down and hold the side rails with both hands.
 - Keep your body centered so your belt buckle is between side rails.
 - Never stand on the top three rungs of a straight ladder or use the top or top step of a stepladder as a step.
 - Keep all areas clear around the top and bottom of ladders when in use.
 - Space the ladder base one foot out for every four feet it reaches up.
 - Ensure that side rails extend at least 36 inches above the bearing point when used to gain access to a roof, floor or other level walking surface.
 - Completely open a stepladder. Never use a folding stepladder in a folded position.
 - Work away from power lines. Electrical shock can occur with metal or wet wooden ladders. Not only is the shock dangerous, but it can cause falls resulting in injury.
- If your work requires greater working flexibility at an elevated level, consider using a scaffold.
 - Store a ladder where it is safely accessible. Consider the weight of your ladder. If it is too heavy for you to move it alone, get help.
 - Only one person at a time should use a ladder.
 - Nonskid pads may prevent a ladder from slipping on a hard, smooth surface.
 - Ladders must be maintained free of oil, grease and other slipping hazards.
 - Extension ladders need to have both locks in place to prevent overloading a rail.
 - Withdraw defective ladders from service by tagging them with a "Do Not Use" sign.

Dangerous work practices

- Stepping on the top two stepladder steps or top three straight ladder rungs.
- Placing ladders on unstable bases such as barrels, truck beds, boxes and uneven ground.
- Climbing the cross-bracing on the rear section of the stepladder (unless it is designed for such use and provides steps on both the front and rear sections).
- Placing ladders in doorways or passageways.
- "Walking" a ladder while you are standing on it.
- Using a metal ladder near power lines.

Ladder Selection

Portable ladders are designed as "one-person" equipment with the proper strength to support the worker, his tools and materials. There are three general classes of ladder construction:

- Type IA Industrial — Heavy-duty with a load capacity not more than 300 pounds.
- Type I Industrial — Heavy-duty with a load capacity not more than 250 pounds.
- Type II Commercial — Medium-duty with a load capacity not more than 225 pounds (suited for painting and similar tasks).
- Type III Household — Light-duty with a load capacity of 200 pounds.

Things to consider when placing a ladder

Physical demands. How much weight will be applied? What length ladder is needed? How will the ladder be positioned best?

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Camelot Coatings636-398-4286
Cottage Coatings Co.636-398-4286

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Hakenewerth Drywall Co.636-327-8711
Knaust Drywall Inc.636-332-5192
Myers Custom Painting636.327.8767
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Sachs Drywall Co.636-332-9070
T. J. O'Neill Painting Co.314-830-6458
Wilmes Drywall Co. Inc.636-327-6685

WRIGHT CITY

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Painting & Decorating Contractors of America (PDCA) St. Louis Chapter #2 Associate Members

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314-231-4060

Jack Bentzinger & Associates

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314-997-4476

Coating Solutions

530 Orchard Lane
Eureka, MO 63025
636-938-5853

D.L. Couch Wallcovering

P.O. Box 570
New Castle, IN 47362
800-433-0790

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280 Indacom Dr.
St. Peters, MO 63376
636-498-1145

Hydraflow Equipment Co.

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St. Louis, MO 63144
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ICI Paints

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Maryland Heights, MO 63043
314-298-8400

MAB Paints

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Maryland Heights, MO 63043
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Midwest Aerials & Equipment

2231 Papin
St. Louis, MO 63103
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St. Louis, MO 63105
314-889-1044

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2001 S. Hanley Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63144
374-644-2008

Porter/PPG

2391 Schuetz Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63146
314-393-5733

Reineke Decorating Center

12017 Manchester
St. Louis, MO 63131
314-821-1616

Rental Services

4609 Cross Roads Industrial Dr.
Bridgeton, MO 63044
314-291-0900

**Schmiedeskamp, Robertson,
Neu & Mitchell**

7700 Bonhomme, Suite 510
St. Louis, MO 63105
314-725-0030

Sherwin-Williams

2145 Schuetz Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63146
314-997-3706

Strothkamp's

14390 Manchester Rd.
Manchester, MO 63011
636-227-5225

The Flood Company

9507 Davis Scott Dr.
St. Louis, MO 63126
314-843-6564

Thybonny Wallcoverings

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314-994-0053

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314-567-3300

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Ceiling Supply

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Bridgeton, MO 63044
314-739-6800

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314 McDonnell Blvd.
Hazelwood, MO 63042
314-731-2282

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St. Louis, MO 63147
314-621-3909

Negwer Materials, Inc.

49 Airport Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63135
314-522-0579

P & A Drywall Supply

2600 Endicott
St. Louis, MO 63114
314-426-3785

RM Supply Inc.

222 Millwell
Maryland Heights, MO 63043
314-298-7272

Strait-Flex International

3851 Corporate Centre Dr.
St. Charles, MO 63304
636-300-1411

St. Louis Plaster Bureau

4656 Baumgartner Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63129
314-894-0200

U. S. Gypsum Company

938D Hemsath Rd.
St. Charles, MO 63303
636-541-2454

Knowing Ladder Safety

continued from p. 9

Potential Hazards. Avoid overhead obstructions, electrical hazards, uneven surfaces, and congested areas.

The 4-to-1 Ratio. For straight and extension ladders, for each four feet of height, set the base out one foot. To help apply the 4-to-1 rule, figure that most rungs are spaced about one foot apart.

The 3-Foot Rule. Extending the ladder three feet beyond the roof prevents you from tipping the ladder by stepping on one of the top steps. Never step over the top of the ladder. Step sideways onto the roof.

Ladder maintenance

Wood ladders should be protected with a clear sealer, varnish, shellac, linseed oil or wood preservative. Wood ladders should not be painted, because paint can hide defects. Check carefully for cracks, rot and splinters, broken rungs, loose joints and bolts and hardware in poor condition.

Aluminum or steel ladders should be inspected before use for rough burrs and

sharp edges. Look closely for loose joints and bolts, faulty welds and cracks. Make sure all hooks and locks on extension ladders are in proper working condition and immediately replace worn or frayed ropes. When metal is bent it becomes permanently stretched and weakened. If the rails, braces or other parts of any metal ladder are bent, destroy the ladder.

Fiberglass ladders should be maintained with a surface coat of lacquer. Ladders that are scratched beyond normal wear should be sanded lightly prior to applying a coat of lacquer.

Unrepaired ladders often contribute to accidents. Portable ladders with structural defects — such as broken or missing rungs, cleats or steps, broken or split rails, corroded components, or other faulty or defective components — must be marked defective, immediately tagged with “Do Not Use” or similar language, then withdrawn from service until repaired or destroyed. □

From SCF Arizona

PDF

CALENDAR

APRIL

- 1-8 **AWCI CONVENTION**
Orlando, Florida
- 11 **ADR SEMINAR**
Crown Center in Clayton 8:00 am
- 12 **ASSOCIATION MEETING**
MAC West 11:30 am
- 18 **PRIDE OF ST LOUIS MEETING**
AGC 7:30 am
- 19 **CSI CONSTRUCTION SHOW**
Chase 11:00 am to 7:00 pm
- 20-21 **PDCA HEART OF AMERICA**
Convention Sheraton City Center
- 26 **PDF BOARD MEETING**
at PDF office 11:30 am

MAY

- 1-3 **FCA WASHINGTON, DC LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE**
- 16 **PRIDE OF ST LOUIS MEETING**
AGC 7:30 am
- 10 **PDF GOLF TOURNAMENT**
Whitmoor CC
- 28 *PDF office closed Memorial Day*
- 31 **PDF BOARD MEETING**
at PDF office 11:30 am

JUNE

- 13 **CCE MEETING**
8:00 am AGC
- 20 **PRIDE OF ST LOUIS MEETING**
AGC 7:30 am
- 28 **PDF BOARD MEETING**
at PDF office 11:30 am

JULY

- 4 *PDF Office closed*
- 11 **CCE MEETING**
8:00 am AGC
- 18 **PRIDE OF ST LOUIS MEETING**
AGC 7:30 am
- 26 **PDF BOARD MEETING**
at PDF office 11:30 am

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