



“CONSTRUCTING A WAY FOR A BETTER FUTURE”

# ECA NEWSLETTER

## JOHNS SOAPBOX



**Remember-this is an op-ed piece and I do not speak for the ECA or any of its members in this “Soapbox”. These are just my ramblings that hopefully you find thought provoking.**



### What Makes “Ted” Stay?

Around this time every year, I am convinced that there should be some corporate “soul searching” that takes place. Winter is the traditional time to do equipment repairs, organize your yard/warehouse, and review what your company should be doing with its projects, the market you are in, your people, and your trajectory for ownership and management. It is a time to reflect on what has been and what lessons can be learned from the past, it is time to review the past year and what has worked and hasn’t, and it is time to invest in your company assets. Time to reflect on how you value those assets and if those assets are your people or your policies.

I have long believed that a company’s greatest assets are its people. I am thinking that is too simplistic-I now believe that a company’s greatest asset is a combination of its people and how the company empowers those people.

“Think about it. What is the primary purpose of a business organization? To assemble a group of people, who previously may have had no association, and empower them to accomplish productive work toward the organization’s objectives.”

Each firm may choose to empower its people differently. Hundreds of decisions need to be made by a firm’s employees that cannot possibly be micromanaged by policies or by a specific management person or persons who are (presumably) in place to review as many of those hundreds of decisions each day. Whether you are selling a product or service, or bidding and building a public works project, your employees are given certain authority to manage those hundreds of decisions each day. If there is too much policy and procedural control, not enough timely decisions are made, and a firm cannot react quickly enough to sustain profitability. If there is too little of the traditional institutional control dictated by policy and procedure, then decisions could be made by employees that are not skilled or trained enough to make those decisions.

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MARY KENNEDY CABRERA

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It is the essence of how you operate. In a small firm, your guy "Ted" might be in charge of estimating a project, then going out and running the project. Total control by "Ted". He estimated the project, got material and subcontractor quotes, wrote the purchase orders, negotiated the prices, was the "point person" with the owner that had hired the firm to do the project, and "Ted" hired the people he wanted, rented or utilized the equipment he wanted, and got the job done. "Ted" might be great at this because he knows how to do this particular project. You, as the owner of the firm, realize you can only have "Ted" do 1-3 of these projects per year, and in order for you to do 10-20 projects per year, you need 6-7 "Teds".

Maybe the owner can swing this and find 6-7 "Teds" and create a business plan that those 20 projects will support. More likely, the owner of the firm wants to have "Ted" manage those 20 projects and oversee them as 6-7 "New Teds" are learning how to be a "Ted".

"Ted" is a valuable asset. How can you best use "Ted"? Can "Ted" be utilized to train other "Teds"? These are corporate decisions only a few folks in your firm can make.

Sound familiar?

What then happens when "Ted" decides to come into your office in January and give you his resignation announcement that he is leaving your firm to go "pursue other opportunities"? If you are a small firm relying on "Ted" you are devastated. If you have several "Teds" you can handle the loss better. Regardless, losing "Ted" is not a good thing no matter how many "Teds" you have.

You have to figure out why "Ted" left. More often than not, there was something you could have done to keep "Ted".

How to protect from key employees leaving?

1. Compensation: One cannot simply pay more and more for those key employees as that becomes unsustainable really quickly. Certainly, compensation needs to be reviewed and modified regularly to ensure your key employees are paid the "prevailing" rate that is in your area. Make sure merit is rewarded. Whether it be from an employee that saves the firm money on a loser of a project, to one that gets a good project done even more efficiently and profitably than anticipated.

2. I would also say that owners and high-level managers have to make an effort to have quality regular discussions with their employees to make sure the employee knows they are being asked, and their responses are being listened to. There is no quicker way for an employee to lose faith in their own firm than by not having any quality input into day-to-day company activities.

3. Praise publicly, criticize privately. Need I say more?

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4. Make sure your employee knows his/her role in the firm including authority and responsibility. Review this on a regular basis so the employee does not lose sight of what is expected of him/her.
5. What is the career trajectory of the employee? This is tougher in small companies. What makes a good project manager does not necessarily make a good area manager. From crew foreman, to project manager is a big jump needing very different skill sets. Can those skill sets be learned from training? Yes, but make sure the employee wants that change in their job expectations, duties, and authority. Some will, some won't.
6. Listen to the laborer, the operator, the foreman, the engineer, and the project manager. They all have different perspectives on company policies and procedures. They may have different opinions on how their actions are limited by company policies.
7. Pay attention to the messaging of what your company core values are. Make sure policies support those values. Pay particular attention to actions the company takes that either support those core values, or sabotage them. For instance, if your company's value is a focus on safety, make sure your firm has policies in place that support that value and rewards behavior that supports that value.
8. How does your firm empower your workers? Is there a way for the hourly worker to feel differently than he/she might feel working for another firm? This is not easy but is the only thing your firm cannot be poached for: how you empower your workers. Workers can be lured away, no matter how well you have taken care of them. That competing firm cannot take away how your workers feel about themselves working on your team. This is what defines you.

There are two interesting articles I read this morning to prep writing this Soapbox-one from the NorthBay Business Journal [Strategies to enhance employee engagement - The North Bay Business Journal](#) and the other from the Harvard Business Review [People Are Not Your Greatest Asset](#). Both articles contain very good ideas for you to ponder as you do your corporate soul searching. The ECA has lots of different firms that have very different business plans. I dare say that most of the ECA firms are really good at assembling a group of people who may be familiar with each other or not, and figure out a way to empower them to accomplish productive work that furthers the organization's objectives.

I hope the two articles and my musings have done a little bit to have you do some corporate soul searching, because now is the time to do that! Figure out your greatest asset, whether it be your people or how you empower them, then put into place the policies and procedures that will make your workers do extraordinary work they are acknowledged for, rewarded for, and trained for. When that competing firm comes for your "Teds", screw them. "Ted" is happy right where he/she is.

You want "Ted" to stay!

Embrace the rain-it gives you time to think!

That's All Folks!

John

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## NEWS YOU CAN USE

1. **City of Santa Rosa to Elect New Mayor and Vice Mayor on Tuesday, December 17, 2024: Here is the excerpt from the City policy as to how the mayor is to be selected, voted upon, and elected:**

ANALYSIS Section XII of the Manual of Procedures and Protocols establishes the following procedure for the election of Mayor and Vice Mayor: a. The incumbent Mayor acts as the Presiding Officer and calls for nominations for a new Mayor from the floor. b. Each nomination must receive a second and be accepted by the nominee prior to a vote on the nomination. c. If only one Council Member has been nominated, the Presiding Officer shall declare that individual to be elected Mayor by unanimous consent. If two or more Council Members have been nominated, election of the mayor will be by process of elimination. d. If two or more Council Members have been nominated, election of the mayor will be by process of elimination as follows: Each Council Member shall vote by ballot for a number of nominees that equals one fewer than total number of nominees. Those nominees receiving one vote or no votes shall be eliminated. Subsequent votes shall be taken by ballot with each Council Member voting for one less nominee than voted for in the previous round. Only nominees not eliminated may be voted upon. e. Once a single nominee receives a majority vote, the Presiding Officer shall declare that nominee the newly elected Mayor and then pass the gavel to the new Mayor. f. Following election of the new Mayor, the newly-elected Mayor calls for nominations for a new Vice Mayor using the same procedures outlined in (b) – (e) above.

2. What have we learned from Governor Newsom and his administration missing their budget projections by \$165 billion in 2022? [\\$165 billion revenue error haunts California's budget | Opinion](#)
  3. Click [HERE](#) for upcoming bids lists for the City of Santa Rosa
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**The Northern California Engineering Contractors Association**  
cordially invites you to attend our

## **47th Annual Installation & Awards Dinner**

*Hyatt Regency  
170 Railroad Square, Santa Rosa  
Saturday, February 1, 2025*

*President's Champagne Reception 5:30 pm  
Dinner & Awards 6:30 pm  
Coffee, Dessert, Port & Cigars 8:30 pm*

**Welcome incoming President:**  
Dan Giordani, Argonaut Constructors &  
The 2025 ECA Board of Directors  
We will be also honoring  
**Volunteers of the Year**  
Stephen Knuttel, The ECA Group  
**Contractor of the Year**  
Kevin Holtzinger, NorthWest General Engineering  
**Affiliate of the Year**  
Wendell Trappe, Canyon Rock  
**Ambassador Award**  
Mark Soiland, Soiland Company  
**The Hermsmeyer Hall of Fame Award**  
will be awarded to Troy Soiland, Northgate Ready Mix  
Posthumous – Randy Parker, North Bay Petroleum

To Register for the Awards Dinner, click [HERE](#)

To Sponsor the Installation & Awards Dinner Click [HERE](#)!

**Thank you!**  
**Bulk Exchange—Bronze Sponsor**

## From the Desk of Jim Persons

### Buried Utilities and Safety

It is important to know the location of underground utility lines on job sites. Rupturing or breaking underground utilities, such as electrical power cables and gas lines can result in serious injuries or even death.

To read more click [HERE!](#)



### Workplace Violence Program

Implemented – July 1, 2024

Senate Bill 553 requires employers to create, implement and maintain a Workplace Violence Program by July 1, 2024. Employers must also train their entire workforce.

The Workplace Violence Program must include a reporting mechanism (how is the employee going to report incidents), detailing who will be responsible for receiving complaints, and who will be responsible for identifying and mitigating workplace hazards.

Jim Persons has developed a Workplace Violence Program and Active Shooter Guidelines that meet the requirements of this new regulation. He can also provide training resources for your employees.

Contact Jim if you are interested in getting his help on a Workplace Violence Program, COVID-19 related issues or other health and safety programs.

email: [jimpersons@safetypride.com](mailto:jimpersons@safetypride.com) or phone: 707-889-0881 or sign up for an upcoming class!



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# CONTRACTOR SAFETY KICKOFF CONFERENCE 2025

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

3 pm—5 pm

1030 Apollo Way, Training Room Santa Rosa

Click [HERE](#) for flyer

### Speakers:

Jim Persons Safety Consultant

Larry Richmond Jr. Mill Creek Safety, Certified OSHA Trainer

**Who Should Attend:** Project Management, Supervisors, Human Resources, & Safety Managers will greatly benefit from attending the conference, others are highly encouraged to attend.



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## SAFETY CORNER

### CPR / First Aid

Training includes bleeding control, strokes, seizures, broken bones and other life-threatening emergencies. Adult/child/infant CPR & airway obstruction management covered. This course is designed as both a course for first-timers and as a refresher.

Wednesday, January 8 / 1– 3 pm

Click [HERE](#) for January flyer

### Confined Space

This course covers proper procedures for making entry into Permit Required Confined Spaces. Participants are prepared to operate in the capacity of Entrant, Attendant or Entry Supervisor during confined space operations. Participants are familiarized with CFR 1910.146 and how to properly employ the permit program. This course is a combination of classroom instruction and practical application in actual permit spaces utilizing the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment, meters and ventilation. This course is required by OSHA before an employee can enter a Permit Required Confined Space. Certification of completion is provided.

Wednesday, January 15 / 1– 3– pm

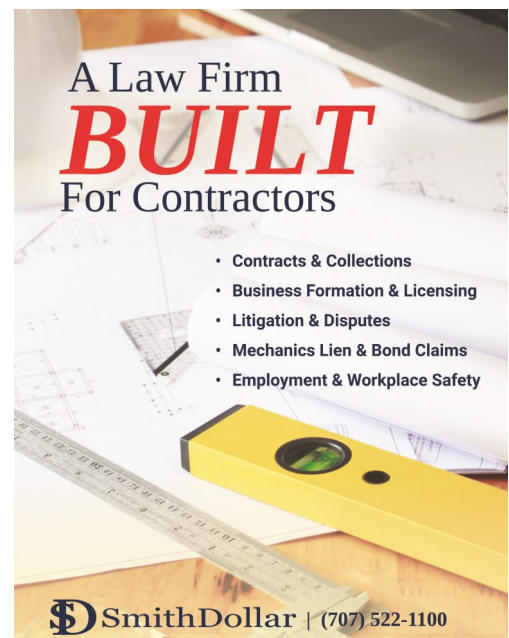
Click [HERE](#) for the January flyer.

### Competent Person Trenching & Excavation

The course will cover soil analysis, sloping, shoring and shielding, hazardous situations, excavation standards and more...

Thursday, January 16 / 1–3:30 pm

Click [HERE](#) for January flyer.





## WORKER'S COMPENSATION

### Worker's Compensation Endorsement By ECA-

HELLO!!! HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR HUMAN RESOURCES PERSON TO CHECK OUT THE WORKERS COMP PROGRAM ECA HAS ENDORSED? Everybody likes to save money, don't they? Doesn't cost you a thing to consider this as an option! Jeff Okrepkie at 707-360-4338.

[Flyer](#)



George Petersen Insurance Agency

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE MANUAL

In the event of an emergency, we have put together the Emergency Response Manual to help our community receive quick service from our members. The manual is sent to city and county agencies in case of an emergency so they will know who to call for services, equipment and materials.

Click [HERE](#) for the 2023-2024 manual.

**It is time to update the Emergency Response Manual.** Help us gather this important information so that we can best serve our community in the case of an emergency. Please fill out your contact information to the attached form, and email to [mary@nceca.org](mailto:mary@nceca.org). If you have any questions, call Mary at 707.546.5500 or [mary@nceca.org](mailto:mary@nceca.org). Thanks!

Click [HERE](#) for the emergency contact form

Click [HERE](#) to sponsor in the Emergency Response Manual

**Get Prepared Now! Here are some very useful tips from CalFire** to get your own house/property "in shape" for fire season. [link](#)

**Pocket Guide for CALOSHA For Contractors:** Click [here](#) for the pocket guide you all need!

**Roadwork in Sonoma County** - Check out the County website for road info [here](#)

## Providing creative solutions for complex environmental issues.



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### Northern California Engineering Contractors Association

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Postal Address: P.O. Box 8249 Santa Rosa, CA 95407 ~Phone: 707.546.5500



## SEASON OF GIVING

### Bring Joy to Club Families This Holiday Season Through Boys & Girls Clubs of Sonoma-Marin's Holiday Gift Drive!

For 18 years, Boys & Girls Clubs has been asking community members like you to help hundreds of families through their Annual Gift Drive. This year, with over 300 families/1200 individuals in need, your kindness is more important than ever. They are collecting gift cards now through Friday, December 13<sup>th</sup> in order to ensure no family goes without this holiday season.

#### How Your Gift Helps:

- **\$150 Safeway Gift Card:** Provides a simple holiday meal
- **\$75 Target Gift Card:** Brings warmth with a coat or joy with a toy
- **\$50 Gas Gift Card:** Reunites families with a visit

#### Ways to Give:

- **Donate Gift Cards:** Deliver or mail them to 1400 N. Dutton Ave., Santa Rosa, CA 95401.

**Adopt a Club Family:** Receive a family's wish list by emailing Hayley Bly at [hbly@bgcsonoma-marin.org](mailto:hbly@bgcsonoma-marin.org). (attached is one of the 300 families in need)

**Make a Direct Donation:** Let us purchase gift cards on your behalf. <https://www.bgcsonoma-marin.org/holidays>



Together, we can ensure every family experiences the joy and dignity of the season. Questions? Contact Hayley Bly at [hbly@bgcsonoma-marin.org](mailto:hbly@bgcsonoma-marin.org).

### Northern California Engineering Contractors Association

The ECA, and its Board of Directors, has been the voice of the engineering construction industry for over 40 years.

The foundation of the ECA has been to address local needs and issues.

The purpose and goal of ECA and its staff are to provide services to the members that help them run their businesses safely, efficiently, and in compliance with the many rules and regulations and mandates of government.

The working committees are the heart and soul of the ECA. The committees are comprised of ECA members.

The committees promote events that enable the ECA to fund community projects that include: Fathers Day "Show & Shine" Car Show, Public Officials Night, the Golf Tournament, and, the "Days of Wine & Dozers" Auction Dinner.

If you would like to join a committee, please email [mary@nceca.org](mailto:mary@nceca.org) ~ We would love to have you!