



“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.

A New Year Ahead

This is the first “real” Soapbox in a few weeks. I trust and hope you all had a nice Christmas and Happy New Year celebration. I hope all of your football teams got in (damn 49ers and Bengals!) to the playoffs, and how about that Arizona State vs Texas Game?!!! That was great nobody who you were rooting for! Football aside, I have some thoughts on the new year upcoming. Here are a few musings:

Political Musings:

- I. Nationally: I am assuming some following actions that may or may not affect your businesses:
 - a. stronger border policy with “arm twisting” to foreign countries that unless they cooperate, they will see retaliation in tariffs. Tariffs can mean higher prices so if you have the ability to buy now before prices go up and stockpile, this would probably be prudent.
 - b. If you utilize the H1 or H2 workforce or any of your suppliers do, I believe this type of foreign workforce supply will be supported and enhanced by the new administration.
 - c. If you are a fan or a worker/contractor/supplier to the high-speed rail project in the Central Valley, I do not think you should count on any more federal dollars coming to support this project.
 - d. I hope the new administration does not take punitive steps toward funding CA infrastructure projects that see money from the fuel tax revenues, or the Infrastructure Act. I don’t think those funding streams will be affected.
 - e. If you are hoping for a lowering of interest rates that could spur more private projects and housing starts, I am not optimistic. I think the Federal Reserve has “shown their hand” and it will be incrementally lowering rates and will not materially affect the development market in 2025.
 - f. Immigration and deportation-I do not believe ICE will do much more than go after criminals in 2025. There simply is not enough “horsepower” to realistically deport all illegal immigrants and I do not believe the new administration has the political support to do that in 2025.
- II. Statewide:
 - a. Newsom continues to “double down” on sanctuary status which protects criminals and compromises community safety. Why? Good question.
 - b. Newsom has backed off a bit from the high-speed rail funding which could free up some discretionary funds for better transportation projects. Fingers crossed.

2025



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III. Local Region:

- a. Sonoma County lost a Supervisor of 26 years who admittedly in the PD recently affirmed what we already knew-that Susan Gorin had lost her passion for doing much the last few years. We should welcome Rebecca Hermosillo and her fairly focused leaning towards worker rights. I think she will be a positive and good addition to the Sonoma County Supes.
- b. James Gore will be kicking into gear his effort to get elected to the State Senate. He has national responsibilities and now campaign duties that will take some of his focus away from "little ole' Sonoma County". The ECA GAC will be discussing support issues for his campaign to the Senate in the near future.
- c. City of Sants Rosa has elected a new Mayor Mark Stapp and seated a new Council member Caroline Banuelos. Out goes Chris Rogers. Net result? Zip. I think Mayor Stapp will try and correct some structural problems but there are social agitators out there that are asking for hundreds of hours of staff time to produce records requests that will not help Mayor Stapp handle the budget woes of Santa Rosa.

Now some general comments about our market and our region.

Last year \$72 million was put on the streets for Sonoma County road repair. That is not going to happen again in 2025. There is constant pressure from influencers and our left leaning electeds and decision makers to push bikes, public transit, and lower vehicle miles travelled in our region. This raises the importance of maintaining our slight influence in the Sonoma County Transportation Authority Citizens Advisory Committee to try and keep tax dollar funding of our road and street repair. Mark Soiland can attest to how prevalent this need is as he sits on the committee with me as Chair. They will elect a new Chair in a month, and I will try to retain my Chair position if possible. If not, and the wrong person gets in that seat, you will see a concerted effort to "bastardize" the Go Sonoma Act which clearly allocates \$25 million or so per year to roads and streets. Marin County acts like they are all built out so projects coming off the drawing board to the dirt digging are not huge and they mostly are smaller replacement projects for utilities and roads that won't change much in 2025. Napa County has a need for infrastructure work, and we shall see if the all-female (first time in history) Board of Supes can move some projects to get funded. Lake and Mendo are secondary markets without much funding support so there are no "mega projects" there. Solano County always sees a fair amount of growth and that should remain a strong market for our contractors to bid on.

All in all, 2025 won't be a disaster, but it won't be a monster year either.

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ECA News heading into 2025:

The reality of the marketplace will be discussed at our first Board meeting on January 28 with new President Dan Giordani leading us. I suspect the events will have to be throttled back a bit in glamor to keep prices down, but we will do our best to keep the ‘vibe’ going for honoring our award winners, our public officials, and to make our car show/golf tourney/auction fun and fiscally affordable. We realize sponsorships may be tougher to come by, so that means we may need to cut back a bit on the “glamor” of what we provide to make budgets. We will discuss the balancing act but rest assured, the cost to you for tickets to events will not go up.

We enter the new year with a solid membership that seems supportive in what we are trying to do. What will we try to do in 2025? Here are a few items:

1. Advocate for business training for our industry that will help you manage the California cost of doing business (look for the Smith Dollar workshop on “New Laws for 2025” coming soon!).
2. Keep providing safety and compliance training for our specific industry. Please-PLEASE, book your safety trainings through the ECA-we will be competitive in pricing and the trainings will be focused on the projects you are doing-not general stuff your workers cannot relate to. Book through the ECA and utilize our website for upcoming seminars and trainings please! With the comments I made in the above segment, the ECA will need training revenue to keep to its budget this year!
3. Continue to foster relationships with public officials and electeds. If any of you attended the Annual General Membership Meeting, you not only saw David Rabbitt there, but you saw State Assemblyman Damon Connolly there as well. Our industry is important, and we need to keep John Bly putting the ECA message out to them- “keep those projects coming, and get rid of as much “red-tape” as you can so those projects can get to bid, and get built ASAP”.
4. Join in collaborative efforts with business friends in other associations like The Builders Exchange, Marin Builder, Sonoma County Alliance, NORBAR, Farm Bureau, Santa Rosa Metro Chamber, Napa Builders Exchange and others. Although their issues are not always the same as ours, by staying unified we get help when we need it for our stuff. The ECA will continue to be involved and work together with many different business friendly groups to stay strong and united.
5. We will continue with our big 5 events in 2025: The Installation and Awards Dinner February 1, the Public Officials Night April 23, the Show and Shine Car Show June 15, the ECA Golf Tournament July 11, and our Annual Days of Wine and Dozers Auction Night on November 1. These five events help us to connect, celebrate, and support the ECA which in turn tries to return your investment in your businesses.
6. The ECA will renew its support and efforts to help attract high school graduates to our industry via the Construction Corps. Several ECA firms donated money to the Construction Corps (\$8,500 worth!), and the ECA will be taking a more active role in trying to find new construction workers for our future!

All in all, I am thankful to be your Executive Director for 2025 and look forward to seeing you all and hearing from you!

That’s All Folks!
John

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NEWS YOU CAN USE

1. *Social media and its use and misuse. How do companies manage the unmanageable? Here is a link to an article that you might find useful in writing and managing your worker handbooks and company policies regarding social media— Click [HERE](#) for article.*
2. OSHA mandates proper PPE fit for construction workers OSHA has issued a final rule requiring personal protective equipment in the construction industry to properly fit each worker, effective Jan. 11. The regulation aligns with general industry and maritime standards, addressing long-standing safety concerns, particularly among women and workers with atypical sizes. OSHA does not anticipate the rule will increase costs or compliance burdens. Full Story: Occupational Health & Safety
3. To go along with some of my musings in the Soapbox, here is some congressional news for 2025- Congressional leadership signals policy shifts for 2025. Key leadership changes in Congress are setting the stage for policy shifts in infrastructure, tax, and financial regulations. Rep. Sam Graves, R-Mo., will prioritize roads and rail as he returns to chair the House Transportation Committee, while Rep. French Hill, R-Ark., takes over the Financial Services Committee, likely advancing crypto regulation. Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., is expected to lead the Senate Banking Committee, marking a pro-industry pivot. Full Story: The Bond Buyer

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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!

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[Herc Rentals Trench Solutions](#)—Dinner Wine Sponsor
[North Bay Petroleum](#)—Bar Sponsor
[Bulk Exchange](#)—Bronze Sponsor

From the Desk of Jim Persons

Safety Incentive Programs

A safety incentive program can encourage employees to practice safe behaviors until they become instinctive, contributing to a stronger culture, and reducing harmful incidents.

However, a poorly managed safety program can do just the opposite.

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 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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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. If you have any questions, call Mary at 707.546.5500 or 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](#)

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Cheryl Long, Bookkeeper
email: cheryl@nceca.org

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

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News you can use

4. Report: RAPs not alleviating construction labor woes
Despite a record \$244 million federal investment in registered apprenticeship programs this year, these programs are not meeting the construction industry's demand for workers, according to a report by Rand. While the number of programs has grown, they remain small, and many apprentices do not complete their training, the report notes. "In order to meet that demand for construction workers, you need to attract about half of high school graduates in the US and you need to do it like ASAP, which is an unrealistic recruitment plan," said report co-author Marwa AL Fakhri. Full Story: Construction Dive (please see Soapbox item 6)
5. **800 new homes in NW Santa Rosa get approval-** [Santa Rosa planning officials give OK to large housing project in city's northwest - The North Bay Business Journal](#)
6. **To echo my point in the Soapbox, here is an article on the shifting focus away from car and truck road travel-** [Plans for Marin-Sonoma travel after Hwy. 101 widening wraps - The North Bay Business Journal](#)
7. **\$72.7 million in road projects-** [Sonoma County roads projects totaled \\$72.7 million in 2024 - PD Plus](#)
8. **Highway 37 Important public input meeting with Caltrans-** <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/highway-37-caltrans-environmental-report/>

We want to highlight a member each week in our MEMBER SPOTLIGHT. What we need from you is a short paragraph on what is happening at your company. New employees, new logo, a new move, exciting news, an update on your company or new equipment! What ever you want to share about your company with our members.

Email mary@nceca.org with your spotlight information and send in photos if you have them!



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 ~ We would love to have you!