

Did you know....

..... February 2004 has 5 Sundays! This is an occurrence that only happens every 28 years ... 1920, 1948, 1976, 2004, 2032, 2060, 2088.

Christian legend says that Valentine's Day is the Feast of St. Valentine. In 270 A.D., the Roman Emperor Claudius II did not want any marriages to take place during wartime. He believed married men made poor soldiers. But Bishop Valentine went against his wishes and performed wedding ceremonies. Valentine was jailed and then executed on February 14, by order of the Emperor. Hence, the name and celebration of love on February 14



BC Construction Show/Buildex



February 24 & 25, 2004

Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre

Once again, ECABC along with COCTA has a booth at Buildex this year. Be sure to come and visit us at booth #1909.

Attend four shows at one time, BC Construction Show, Homebuilders and Renovator Expo, Buildex and Design Northwest and you'll see and learn more about all the major products, technologies, services and solutions for the management, operations, maintenance and retrofit of all buildings commercial, residential, educational, healthcare, hotels and institutional.

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550 Exhibits with up-to-date information on 46 different categories of products, technologies, building systems and services. Save time and stay informed.

Register online at www.bccconstruct.com or www.homebuilderexpo.com by February 10, 2004 for a free pass to 550 exhibits, technical updates and product demonstrations. Any questions? Contact 604.739.2112 ext. 228

Show dates	Exhibit Hours	Seminar Hours
Tuesday, February 24	10 am—5 pm	8:30 am—5 pm
Wednesday, February 25	10 am—4 pm	8:30 am—3 pm

BC Safety Authority (BCSA) Announces Fee Increase

On April 1, 2004, the British Columbia Safety Authority (BCSA) will be delegated the responsibility for the delivery of safety services under the *Safety Standards Act*. For further information on this please visit www.safetyauthority.ca.

From that point on, all of the services that have been provided to you by the Safety Engineering Services Division of the British Columbia Government will be delivered by the BCSA.

In the interest of providing the greatest possible notice, the BCSA is advising clients that, effective April 1, 2004, a new fee schedule will take effect. This schedule reflects the need to address the fee freeze that has kept safety fees at the same levels for a number of years. The increased fees reflect only the rise in the British Columbia Consumer Price Index (CPI), as provided by BC STATS (www.bestats.gov.bc.ca) since the time of the last fee increase in each technology area.

Technology	Last Fee Adjustment	% Increase
Aerial Tramways*	April 1987	TBD
Amusement Rides	April 1999	10.28%
Boiler and Pressure Vessels	November 1998	11.38%
Electrical	April 1999	10.28%
Elevating Devices	April 1999	10.28%
Gas	April 1999	10.28%
Railways	April 2002	4.00%

* Please note that changes to fees for the Aerial Tramway sector are currently being discussed with the industry. A complete list of individual fees, current and effective on April 1, 2004, will be available by February 9, 2004 on line at www.safetyauthority.ca. Fees will be adjusted again in January 2005 to reflect ongoing changes in the CPI. The fee schedule for 2005 will be announced in September 2004 to provide sufficient time for planning.

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Soft tissue injuries prompt discussion

by Frank Lillquist

Ernie Schall went into a coma and died after being knocked out by Primo Carnera in the 13th round of their 1933 heavyweight bout. But anyone with any ring moxie knows that what really killed Schall was the damage done by the beating from Max Baer, (who hit like thunder) in a previous fight.

The same conditions can apply – thankfully without the fatality – to soft tissue injuries (STIs) in construction, according to a document soon to be submitted to the Workers' Compensation Board of BC. The presentation, prepared by the **Council of Construction Associations (COCA)**, says the existing system for STIs can unfairly penalize individual employers.

Accordingly, the industry wants STIs removed from the Experience Rating (ER) system the WCB uses to increase or decrease assessment rates for employers.

COCA points out that construction employers hire workers on a job-by-job basis and in the course of a year an individual may work for many employers. That worker may suffer a partial tear or injury working for one employer but that injury may not manifest itself, or be reported, until the worker has gone on to another employer.

So, under the existing system an employer can be penalized for injuries a worker sustained partially or wholly on previous jobs. This is one of five main concerns COCA has about the STI system, another being that employers who hire or keep employing older workers are penalized. Older

workers, says COCA, are more likely to suffer an STI and likely to stay off work longer.

This can encourage discrimination on the basis of age, a particular problem in an era when the construction workforce is aging.

Other concerns are:

- Construction workers have far less regular employment than other industries. The workers often perform specific jobs for one employer and are then laid off. In some cases a soft tissue injury claim may be reported which has no actual connection to the worksite.
- STI claims create a greater opportunity for fraud because they are difficult to diagnose and a recovery period is hard to predict.
- Concerns about the perceived unfairness of STI costs may lead to under-reporting or non-reporting of STI claims. This is unfair to workers and has a negative impact on the integrity of the workers compensation system. The WCB has numerous objections to excluding STIs from the ER, including the possibility of reduced effort to prevent these injuries and facilitate quick returns to work. However, **Grant McMillan**, president of COCA, says the board has expressed a willingness to discuss the matter with the industry.

Courtesy: Journal of Commerce

ECA Logo

Please remember to use the ECABC logo in conjunction with your stationery or any advertising you do. Association membership reflects well on a contractor or supplier and the association. For your convenience, here is an electronic version of our logo that you may cut and paste.

For those of you still receiving The Conduit by fax, please call Zana at 604-294-4123 and she will be pleased to email it to you or send it to you on a CD.



Hank Paquin, Ron Fettback, Jeff Norris, Jane Adams and Dennis Carlow, president of the Vancouver chapter. Jeff and Jane from the St. Paul's Hospital Foundation, were there to present ECABC and the Vancouver chapter with an award for our assistance with the highly successful 2003 Lights of Hope campaign. Canem West, Mott Electric, Raincoast Electric, Sasco Systems, and Western Pacific Enterprises provided much of the manpower needed for the assembly



Small Business Construction Centre Now Available

COCA has worked with the WCB to provide orientation for the WCB staff that will be handling telephone calls on claims from the Construction Industry. The orientation included visits to construction sites so that the WCB staff can improve their knowledge of the activities.

Representatives are now available to assist with reporting a claim or getting information about the claims process.

The Client Service Representatives – who only deal with construction -- will be available to take calls from small construction businesses and speed the process and the efficiency of claims adjudication. You will get to speak personally with the staff. If you reach voice mail, they guarantee to return all calls left on voice mail within 24 hours.

Use this service to save your company time and money!

Here is the contact information for the Centre:

Tel. 604-233-5353
Tollfree 1-866-338-3888
Fax 604-233-5360
Tollfree fax 1-866-616-2558

Dedicated WCB Claims Manager Joins Construction Industry

The second major step to reduce the duration and costs of claims has been taken with the appointment of a dedicated claims manager to work with COCA on behalf of the construction industry.

COCA had requested the WCB to provide an experienced person to provide a range of services to the Construction Industry. The WCB recognized that an employer's ability to contain costs and duration of time loss associated with injury and illness is related to their ability to manage claims. To that end, Mike McKenna, a Client Services Manager in Compensation Services with the WCB has been seconded to work with the Construction Industry.

Mike is an Occupational Therapist by profession and has worked for the WCB since 1996, most recently in a similar position in the Health Care sector. He has experience in claims, rehabilitation, and has run his own small business focusing on case management and return to work. He brings a unique combination of knowledge of the complexities of the WCB, a strong clinical background, and experience with Early Safe Return to Work Programs.

Mike will provide ongoing assistance to employers in reducing time loss associated with injury and illness in order to decrease WCB costs to the

Construction Industry. Statistics demonstrate that ongoing and sustained improvements in injury prevention and disability management programs, which include opportunities for the Early Safe Return to Work of injured workers, are required in order to decrease WCB rates.

More specifically this new initiative provides for:

1. An in depth analysis of your current inventory of claims, with a view to action/assist dormant claims that need attention.
2. A case by case opportunity to consult on claims issues.
3. A company-specific review of your assessments, injury profile, and costs. This is presented in report format, and is designed to target areas of your business that could benefit from assistance.
4. Assistance with setting up Early Safe Return to Work programs.

Please feel free to contact Mike directly at 604-214-6991 or mmckenna@wcb.bc.ca.

COCA looks forward to working with the WCB on this promising initiative.

Foreign tradesmen easing critical shortage in Ontario

Greater Toronto Homebuilders' Association president, Mark Parsons, makes a case for the continuing introduction of foreign workers into the Canadian construction economy in last week's Toronto Star article. As Mr. Parsons points out:

"Our industry has struggled for several years, especially in the Greater Toronto Area, where we've been building at a pace not seen since the late '80s. Illegal workers, people who may have entered Canada as visitors, but who are working while here, or those who have stayed on after their visas have expired, have become indispensable to the industry.

While The Greater Toronto Home Builders' Association does not condone this practice, we acknowledge that it exists. Advocates of foreign tradesmen contest that the GTA has been experiencing

tremendous growth in the building industry and the required skilled tradesmen are needed to mitigate the high housing demand."

"With record low mortgage rates expected to continue and forecasts for the GTA to grow by about 100,000 newcomers a year for the foreseeable future, we soon may not be able to keep up with demand. Obviously, this is not just an industry problem. Without a stable and skilled workforce, we can't deliver new homes and condominiums to buyers on time. Sooner or later there will be actual shortages, leading to rising prices and some people being shut out of the market. In turn, that would diminish the robust contribution residential construction makes each year to the provincial and national economies."

Attention Employers: Have a position to fill?

Post/Advertise your job opportunity for: \$45.00

Let us help you fill your job vacancy by posting it on our web site for 60 days at the special rate of \$ 45.00. This offer is valid until Feb 29, 2004.

We are excited and pleased by the response from both the job seeker and employers. The service is continuing to gain momentum. We have registered 1928 construction job seekers to date – framers, cement finishers, electricians, welders, road construction equipment operators, project coordinators and more in our database. However additional job opportunities on the web site will attract more job seeker registrations. It's that simple!

The **VRCA Construction Job Centre** provides a central place for job seekers and employers to connect and is an excellent recruitment tool for

you. The service needs your participation to attract more job seekers and that's the reason for extending our special introductory offer. It is becoming the first place construction job seekers visit when searching for work.

We look forward to working closely with you to ensure the service is successful in providing you with a recruitment employment service that meets your needs. See web site www.construction-jobs.ca

We welcome the opportunity to assist you with your recruitment needs and look forward to hearing from you.

Contact: Marlene Derksen, Manager; Phone: (604) 855-7227; Fax: (604) 855-7189; E-mail: info@construction-jobs.ca

Point Counter Point

by Norm Streu & Chris Hirst

Pre-qualification: just another cost in the tendering process?

No one likes to be told that they aren't qualified to do a job. It's not surprising then that contractors are rarely in favour of pre-qualification.

Pre-qualification is much like a pre-tender beauty contest in which the owner pre-selects those contractors who the owner believes are best qualified to bid on the tender.

Contractors don't like it because it can add more cost and more complication to the tender process with little or no corresponding benefit to them. On the other hand, owners often favour pre-qualification because it gives them greater control over the tendering process. Owners also perceive that pre-qualification can screen out "problem" contractors as well as the truly unqualified. In their view, this allows the actual tender to be more open and direct.

The British Columbia Construction Association believes that pre-qualification is only appropriate in very limited circumstances. We recently had a discussion with Warren Perks, BCCA Vice-President and Director of Industry Standards, on the BCCA's views on pre-qualification:

Q: What does the BCCA see as the problem with pre-qualification?

A: It is a subjective process controlled by public owners. The pre-qualification process has two inherent handicaps for contractors.

First, there is added red tape and cost for contractors to prepare pre-qualification documents. Second, with the process in the hands of those who determine a contractor's right to bid, there is an inherent potential for abuse.

Q: In the BCCA's view, in what circumstances is pre-qualification appropriate?

A: It should be used for General Contractors and Trade Contractors only when there is a need for special expertise such as specific environmental considerations and/or public safety issues.

Q: To what extent does the Public Construction Council share BCCA's views in this regard?

A: The Public Construction Council's view is a little broader. Pre-qualification may be considered where it is determined that there is a need to pre-qualify general contractors or trade contractors because of certain special expertise requirements, such as specific environmental considerations, specialized public safety requirements or other clearly identified criteria.

Q: What is the BCCA doing to promote its views on pre-qualification?

A: Ensuring that appropriate guidelines are being created and adopted by such organizations as PCC with endorsement by the constituent organizations and as tools for the B.C. Government's Capital Asset Management Framework. We also speak out on the issue when we get the opportunity during presentations about public tendering.

The BCCA Recommended Guidelines For The Use of Pre-qualification of General Contractors and Trade Contractors sets out in detail the Association's policy on pre-qualification. These guidelines can be downloaded in PDF format from the BCCA's website at www.bccasn.com.

In the writers' opinion, the tendering process already provides an owner with significant protection from unqualified tenderers. The privilege clauses found in most tenders allow an owner to disqualify a nominally successful contractor for legitimate business reasons which may be related to qualifications. Furthermore, the practical effect of bonding requirements is to screen out unqualified contractors.

In light of the fact that the owner already has protection from unqualified bidders, in many cases pre-qualification is an unnecessary additional cost to the tendering process.

Courtesy: Journal of Commerce

What is the BC Safety Authority?

The British Columbia Safety Authority established under the new *Safety Authority Act* is a not-for-profit corporation created to administer the service delivery components of the *Safety Standards Act* commencing April 1, 2004. The Authority will carry out activities throughout British Columbia that foster safety in the design manufacture, construction, installation, operation, maintenance and use of technical products, equipment and systems.

The Authority will deliver services that apply to work and products related to:

- Aerial Tramways
- Amusement Rides
- Boilers and Boiler Systems

- Electrical Equipment and Systems
- Elevating Devices
- Gas Appliances and Systems
- Pressure Vessels and Piping
- Refrigeration Equipment and Systems
- Railways

The overall changes to the safety system and the creation of the Authority will help to ensure the long-term sustainability of the safety system and assure British Columbians of continued excellent safety services now and in the future.



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Labour Force

British Columbia's job market lost momentum in January. An influx of job seekers, combined with negligible job growth, pushed the unemployment rate up 0.5 percentage points to 7.3% (seasonally adjusted).

Adult men (aged 25+) accounted for 98% of the increase in the labour force. These were likely "discouraged job seekers" drawn back into the labour force by the impressive job growth seen in the last quarter of 2003. However, employment growth in January—an increase of one twentieth of one percent—was not enough for the expansion of the labour force (+0.6%). There were 13,000 additional people competing for 1,000 new jobs.

While the overall number of jobs was basically unchanged, there were significant changes in the mix of jobs.

There was solid job growth in the goods-producing sector (+3.9%)—especially in construction (+9.9%). However, the much larger service sector saw a decline in the number of jobs (-0.9%). Despite the growth of goods-producing employment, there was a drop in the number of full time jobs (-0.3%). This was offset by a strong increase in part-time work (+1.3%). There was also growth in both public (+1.3%) and private (+0.4%) sector jobs. Self-employment, in contrast, fell by 2.3%.

Unemployment rates rose for both young people and adults. However, youth unemployment, at 14.8%, is now two and a half times the rate for those aged 25 and over. (5.9%) January's influx of men into the labour force, created an almost one percentage point gap between the unemploy-

ment rates of men (7.7%) and women (6.9%) in BC. During the last quarter of 2003, the difference between these rates was negligible.

Regionally, unemployment in BC ranged from a high of 13.8% (three month moving average) in the North Coast and Nechako regions to a low of 4.4% in the Northeast.

The Mainland/Southwest region—greater Vancouver and its surrounding communities—had the second lowest unemployment (6.2%).

For Canada as a whole, unemployment was unchanged in January, at 7.4% (seasonally adjusted).

In the previous month, BC's unemployment rate dropped below the national level for the first time since spring, 2001. BC continues to have below average unemployment, though only by a margin of 0.1 percentage points.

The only province to see a considerable drop in the unemployment rate in January was Newfoundland and Labrador (-1.5 percentage points), though the province still suffers from extremely high unemployment (16.5%).

Alberta, despite a loss of jobs in January (-0.5%), still has the lowest unemployment rate among the provinces (5.0%). The other Prairie Provinces—Manitoba (5.2%) and Saskatchewan (5.6%)—closely follow.

Data Source: Statistics Canada

Benefits of Membership in ECABC

Advocacy

- 1 Strong united voice to government for expressing opinions and concerns regarding issues that directly affect the electrical industry
- 2 Representation on other associations, committees and councils that deal with apprenticeship, safety, WCB and other issues

Consulting - Contract interpretation service

Discounts and Special Services

- 1 Petro-Canada SuperPass Program - New!
- 2 Esso Fleet Discount Program
- 3 Accent Inns – Preferred Rates
- 4 DM Credit Services

Education

- 1 Seminars or information sessions and speakers at chapter meetings
- 2 Salaried Employees Training Trust Fund (SETTF)
- 3 BC Electrical Association Scholarship Fund

Health Care – BC Construction Association Group Benefit Plan

Insurance - Industry specific insurance from Federated Insurance

Marketing – ECA website, advertising, electrical engineering/consultants program ECABC logo/membership stickers

Networking - Regular networking opportunities at monthly chapter meetings, annual general meetings, and an annual national conference

News

1. The Conduit and Relay newsletters to keep you up to date on industry issues and events and
2. NECA/WCB Safety Alerts

Publications – Access to a host of publications, videos, and manuals such as the Seismic Restraint Standards Manual and Health & Safety Policy Manual.

Benefits currently in negotiation—

- Legal work, discounted
- Accounting (taxes, etc) discounted
- Cellular phone discounts
- ECABC Scholarship Fund

ECABC's Outside Involvement (ECA is involved with the following organizations/associations)

BC Electrical Association (BCEA), BCIT Construction Management Program Advisory Committee, BCIT Electrical and Electronic Program Advisory Committee, Camosun Electrical Program Advisory Committee, College Instructors Articulation Committee, Construction Specifications Can-

ada (CSC), Council of Construction Associations (COCA), Council of Construction Trade Associations (COCTA), Electrical Inspectors Association (EIA), Electrical Safety Review and Appeal Boards, Electrical Safety Advisory Committee (ESAC), IBEW 213/ECA Joint Training and Journeyman Upgrading Committee (EJTC), Public Construction Council (PCC) and Western Joint Electrical Training Society (Western Jets)



Electrical Contractors Association of BC

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Schedule of Events

February 18, 2004
Vancouver Chapter Meeting
Accent Inn, Burnaby

February 24—25
BC Construction Show
Vancouver Trade & Convention Centre

March 11, 2004
Vancouver Island Chapter Meeting
Location TBA (Probably Nanaimo)

March 19—24
Board of Directors
Spring Planning Retreat

June 11, 2004
Hall of Fame Dinner
Waterfront Hotel

July 28, 2004
Vancouver Chapter Fireworks
Dinner Cruise

Someplace Warm

A couple from Minneapolis decided to go to Florida for a long weekend to thaw out during one particularly icy winter. They planned to stay at the same hotel where they spent their honeymoon 20 years before.

Because they both had jobs they found it difficult to coordinate their travel schedules, so it was decided that the husband would fly to Florida on a Thursday, and his wife would follow him the next day.

Upon arriving as planned, the husband checked into the hotel. In his room there was a computer so he decided to send his wife an email back in Minneapolis. However, he accidentally left out one letter in the address, and sent the e-mail without realizing his error.

In Houston, a widow had just returned from her husband's funeral. The dearly departed was a minister who had been called to glory following a heart attack. The widow checked her e-mail, expecting messages from relatives and friends. Upon reading the first message she fainted. The widow's son rushed into the room, found his mother on the floor, and saw the computer screen which read:

To: My Loving Wife
Subject: I've arrived

You're probably surprised to hear from me, they have computers here now and you are allowed to send e-mails to your loved ones. I've just arrived and checked in. I see that everything has been prepared for your arrival tomorrow. Looking forward to seeing you then!

Hope your journey is as uneventful as mine was.

PS Sure is hot down here!



Mike Brewis, president of the Vancouver Island chapter and Susan Mehinagic, CA, LLB, TEP of Grant Thornton LLP Chartered Accountants who spoke on Provincial Sales Tax at the January 8th chapter meeting in Victoria.

Editors Corner

ITAC/Apprenticeship Update

Unless you've been out of town or hiding somewhere, you've probably heard about the latest government scandal involving the fudging of marks for the inter-provincial Red Seal exams at ITAC. Apparently Shirley Bond, Minister of Advanced Education asked her new Deputy Minister Philip Steenkamp to investigate what's left of ITAC in January.

The resulting investigation apparently turned up evidence that ITAC manager, Phil Turpin had been making regular "executive decisions" concerning marks on the Inter-Provincial Red Seal exams that were falling short of the mark, so to speak. The minimum grade required to pass the federally sponsored exam is 70%. Subsequently, Turpin was fired and Stuart Clark, manager of the Industry Training Branch in Victoria, was

suspended. Speculation is that Turpin was getting his marching orders from Clark, but whom was Clark getting his marching orders from?

Other news would suggest that ITAC is so short-staffed with inexperienced personnel; they have been rubber-stamping virtually every application. Currently they are down to about fifteen employees from over a hundred a year ago. Apparently it's so bad, that virtually anyone could indenture an apprentice, and immigrants and others are regularly challenging exams, and passing with marks lower than the minimum requirement.

In other news, there is a recently published story about ICBA's Gordon Stewart and Phil Turpin allegedly flying up to Nelson at ITAC's or BC taxpayer's expense, to "expedite" the graduation of some struggling carpentry pre-apprentices. It is further alleged that this involved "coaching" them for the exam by giving them the answers, before indenturing them to ICBA and putting them to work on a project for its founder who lives in the area.