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Kalb's Capitol Connection

By David Kalb

Like a rock tossed into water, ripples from the mortgage financing meltdown are forcing contractors and others to be more creative with an economy in recession. I'll suggest some ways to increase the chance for profit in 2009 as we also 'take five' on LLC's becoming licensed as contractors in California. Finally, contractors will be inconvenienced by the ongoing State budget battle in Sacramento, and have the honor of paying extra for that privilege...



Q: The recent changes in economic climate have forced me to look for ways to increase my income. I would like to get a contractor's license in California to build my own custom homes and then sell them. I had many years of general contracting experience in another state but never a license. Can I somehow use this past experience to get a license in California? If not, I wondered if I could easily get a license in another state like Arizona or Nevada? It seems very difficult to get a license in California. Thanks for your input.

A: Changes in the economic climate are impacting most contractors. I have received a number of questions recently that were prompted by the current economic downturn.

The three states you mention all allow "self-employed" experience as long as it totals more than 4 years (within the past 10). Having dealt extensively with CA, NV and AZ for more than 20 years, I can tell you that licensing in these states are equally complex. I suggest concentrating on the State you're interested in rather than which one may be "easier". For instance, AZ requires that you register for a Transaction Privilege Tax number and list 25 projects you have worked on. NV requires both a financial and bank statement. CA requires fingerprinting which has caused some problems for applicants. All three states require proof of your experience qualifications and passage of a business/law and general building trade exam.

Q: I am interested in adding other classifications to my existing "B". Can I do this without
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Charlie Kuffner, Executive Vice President at Swinerton, Named CEA President for 2009

Charlie Kuffner, executive vice president of Swinerton Builders, San Francisco, was elected as the 2009 president of the Construction Employers' Association (CEA) during the group's 22nd annual general membership dinner meeting held in Concord in late January.

Also elected were Rick Martellaro, president of Lathrop Construction Associates, Inc., as CEA first vice president; Patrick Callahan, senior vice president & director of operations/Northern California of Hathaway Dinwiddie Construction Co. as CEA vice president; and Chuck Palley, president of Cahill Contractors, Inc., San Francisco as CEA past president/treasurer. Michael Walton, president of Employers' Advocate Inc., continues to serve as CEA's secretary.

Kuffner is a registered Civil Engineer and has been with Swinerton Builders since 1981. While earning a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering at Stanford University, Kuffner was hired by the firm as a student intern Project Engineer. He joined Swinerton Builders after graduation and subsequently completed his Master of Science in Engineering Management, also at Stanford University. During his tenure at Swinerton Builders, Kuffner has worked as project engineer, cost engineer, project manager, operations manager, division manager and region manager. Currently, his responsibilities include office and field construction administration, business and strategic planning, business development and estimating, scheduling, quality control and professional staff training.

In addition to his many contributions to CEA as an active Board member and Legislative Committee member, Kuffner is very involved in community and philanthropic efforts. He has proudly served as President of the Swinerton Foundation which has donated over



CEA 2009 officers, from left: CEA Vice President, Patrick Callahan, Hathaway Dinwiddie Construction Co.; CEA Past President/treasurer, Chuck Palley, Cahill Contractors, Inc.; CEA President, Charlie Kuffner, Swinerton Builders; CEA First Vice President, Rick Martellaro, Lathrop Construction Associates, Inc.; and CEA Secretary, Michael Walton.

\$1.5 million to worthwhile not-for-profit organizations in the last five years. In addition, he serves on the Board of the San Francisco Embarcadero YMCA, and the Board of the Architectural Foundation of San Francisco, an educational non-profit organization that provides classes and internships for high school students in the fields of architecture, engineering and construction.

Approximately 300 Northern California building industry executives attended CEA's annual banquet, along with the leadership of the Northern California Carpenters Union, who were invited guests. Robert Stevenson, author of the highly successful book "How to Soar Like an Eagle in a World Full of Turkeys," was the keynote speaker at the event.

At the banquet, CEA recognized member firms for their exceptional commitment to workplace safety. Several special categories of CEA safety recognition awards were presented.

CEA President's Safety Awards were presented to 10 firms: C. Overaa & Co., Richmond; Clark Construction Group - California LP, Oakland; DPR Construction, Inc., Redwood City; Hallmark Construction, Inc., Santa Clara; McCarthy Building Cos., Inc., San Francisco; Performance Mechanical, Inc., Pittsburg; S.J. Amoroso Construction Co., Inc., Redwood Shores; Swinerton Builders, San Francisco; TBI Construction & Construction Management, San Jose; and XL Construction Corporation, Milpitas.

Recipients of this prestigious award reported a total incident rate 50% below the industry average, a lost workday incident rate 50% below the industry average, an experience modification rate

≤ .70; and were either a recognized participant in a Cal/OSHA partnership program or demonstrated a comprehensive safety training program.

Besides the President's Safety Award, Hallmark Construction, Inc. also received CEA's Most Improved Safety Program award.

In addition, it was announced that Jim Girk, Warehouse Manager for Nibbi Bros. Associates, Inc., was selected as the recipient of the 2008 CEA Leadership in Safety Award for his varied contributions to and influence over his company's safety program.

The Construction Employers' Association is comprised of over 100 unionized building contractors who perform billions of dollars in public and private construction work throughout Northern California each year. CEA's membership list includes most of the leading general building construction companies in Northern California.

CEA offers a number of services and programs to its members including negotiation of union agreements, professional labor relations representation, legislative representation, safety education and advocacy, labor-management partnering, builder networking opportunities, a public works/prevaling wage compliance assistance program and many other benefits. Since 1985, CEA has negotiated the Northern California Carpenters Master Agreement for the industry, covering some 40,000 carpenter employees and over 2,500 signatory contractors. CEA's offices are located in Walnut Creek and Sacramento. For more information on CEA, visit www.cea-ca.org.

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