

California's Construction Employers Say Industry Outlook Improving

Builders and union leaders share concerns for stable work force at summer conference

The Construction Employers' Association's annual State of the State Labor-Management Conference with the leadership of the Northern California Carpenters in South Lake Tahoe brought to light two important issues facing the building construction industry in Northern California: business is picking up and there is a real need for more apprentices in the Carpenters' Training Program.

"Things have picked up, and with the industry becoming busier, we are concerned about an aging work force," said Kip Trexel, president of the Construction Employers' Association. "The demographics of our work force are changing. We need to attract more young people into the apprenticeship program and also continue to focus on learning new technologies in construction," he added.

"The good news is that the Carpenters Training Committee for Northern California is ready to accommodate hundreds of new apprentices and offers continuing education for our talented journeymen already on the jobsite."

Representatives from the Carpenters' Training Program gave conference attendees a presentation on a new pre-apprenticeship program that will be launched later this summer in which carpenter apprentice applicants will attend classes full-time for nine weeks before being dispatched to employer jobsites as new apprentices. This program will be similar to a college preparatory, aimed at ensuring that those who enter the apprentice program are pre-screened and



Leaders of the Construction Employers' Association and the Northern California Carpenters Regional Council held their 17th Annual CEA/Carpenters State-of-the-State Conference in June. From left, Michael Walton, secretary of CEA; Larry Nibbi, president of Nibbi Bros. Inc.; Robert Alvarado, executive officer of the Northern California Carpenters Regional Council; CEA President Kip Trexel, project executive/SPG operations manager, Howard S. Wright Construction Co.; and William Feyling, executive director of the Carpenters 46 Northern California Counties Conference Board.

know what to expect once they enter their apprenticeship, thus increasing graduation rates.

"The relationship the Carpenters Union has with the Construction Employers' Association and its members in Northern California is truly unique and can serve as a model for labor management agreements throughout the country," said Robert Alvarado, executive officer of the Northern California Carpenters Regional Council. "We support each other and because we have open communication we can identify problems in advance, avoid potential problems on the jobsite, as well as work together to overcome industry challenges," he added.

Michael Walton, secretary of CEA, said, "Together, we can address the challenge of our aging workforce. We all know that talent sells the next job and that the key to future success for union contractors lies in providing superior training and increasing the graduation rate of apprentices. We

believe the new pre-apprenticeship program is definitely a step in the right direction."

Builders from throughout Northern California reported that they are seeing a moderate increase in business in many sectors. School construction continues to be a strong point in the industry and there are more bond measures anticipated for the November ballot to modernize California public schools.

The Construction Employers' Association is comprised of approximately 100 contractors—mostly general contractors—who perform building construction work in Northern California. CEA's membership base performs over eight billion dollars in public and private construction volume annually in California.

The Northern California Carpenters Regional Council is comprised of 30 local unions covering the 46 Northern California Counties. Together, these locals represent over 37,000 members. ■