

A QUARTERLY INDUSTRY PUBLICATION

# JOB SCOPE

FOR KEY FIELD AND OFFICE PEOPLE IN MECHANICAL CONTRACTING • Fall/Winter 2005



What's  
news...

## Katrina K.O.s contractors

But opens gate to Gulf  
Coast building boom.

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FROM JOBSCOPE NOTEBOOKS: ONE MONTH AFTER HURRICANE KATRINA

# Battered Gulf Coast contractors, union down, but not out

By Don Doherty

There were television images of this hurricane that are hard to forget: driving wind and rain smashing windows and shredding curtains in a downtown New Orleans hotel; desperate people plucked from rooftops by rescue helicopters after the levee gave way flooding the city and nearby parishes; and in Mississippi other survivors, now homeless, their faces revealing in a way words cannot how it feels to lose everything you had in the world.

But on this sunny Sunday afternoon, it is not the pictures I recall but rather the comment of one reporter

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Hurricane survivor Mike (Mule) Locklin, a member of United Association Local 568 in Gulfport, Miss., stands on the steps to his house, which, caught in the path of Hurricane Katrina, was not as fortunate.

## Unions come to aid of scattered members, families

When Dana Colombo evacuated he left thinking, "This isn't going to happen to me. I'll just leave my truck. We're going for only a couple days on a road trip to Memphis, sit by the pool, drink a couple of beers and be back home by the weekend." So he and his family



The sign and playground equipment outside UA Local 198 headquarters, in Baton Rouge, La., illustrate the changes brought about by the hurricane.

packed into the car with enough clean clothes to last them a few days.

His plan at least got them to safety before the monster hurricane arrived. The plan radically changed, however, while they were away. It started with the horrible images on the television in their hotel room.

"The destruction from the hurricane was bad enough," Colombo said. "But it really didn't sink in how bad until later in the day when the levee broke and the city flooded."

Colombo's house and thousands of others in St. Bernard Parish, east of New Orleans, were left underwater  
*(Continued on page 6)*

## COMMENTARY

## For those who need (give) help, there's no rest for the weary

A lot has been written inside this issue about the devastation of homes, businesses, cars, casinos and more wrought by Hurricane Katrina's crushing winds and floods. The pictures recorded it well. But what about the people caught in the path of nature's rage? Can the camera be as effective in portraying the human side of such tragedy? The photograph of a lifeless victim floating face down in floodwater might capture the sad end of one unfortunate soul, but it misses the unbroken worry their loved ones suffer while they are missing or the grief when the worst is confirmed.

As I drove slowly one morning along the side streets of a suburban subdivision near Slidell, La., I sensed that except for the bright sun that inched across the sky, in every other way, this place seemed strangely on "pause." Where children should have been at play, front yards were piled high with water-logged furniture, carpets, refrigerators, washing machines, and other household appliances. Through open garage doors, wooden wall studs stood bare again, separated from their spoiled drywall. In front of every house, for blocks in every direction, the picture was the same. I stopped and got out of the car along one street. Outside I heard evidence someone was here — a vacuum cleaner at work in one direction, a chainsaw in another — and finally spotted a sweaty, shirtless man as he emerged from inside a house pushing a loaded wheelbarrow to the front



lawn. Without a glance upward, he dumped his load and slowly disappeared into the house. As I watched him I could only imagine how many days he had toiled at his task, in uncomfortable heat and humidity, and how many days of the same there would be before his house would be livable again and his life something closer to normal.

There are signs of suffering, big and small, one notes while visiting with some of Katrina's survivors. There's the story of one contractor who hid in his dark attic for four days and nights, without food, water or power, waiting to be rescued. There are days now spent in search of food, clothing, gasoline, office space or a better living space — waiting for the power to come back, for FEMA to call back, the telephone to work, the faucet to gush water, cable television to return to service.

What's my point? After the hurricane struck, Americans were asked to help. And they responded with unprecedented generosity. Truckloads of emer-

gency food, water, clothing and other supplies arrived one after another. The American Red Cross and numerous other relief organizations collected cash contributions exceeding \$1 billion. At the industry level, relief efforts conducted by both the United Association and Mechanical Contractors Association of America are sending thousands of dollars and other support to aid union members and mechanical contractors in the afflicted area.

Much has been accomplished already to meet the basic, life-sustaining needs of Hurricane Katrina's survivors. But much, **much more work remains, not only for the Red Cross but also for the mechanical construction industry.** Many union members who evacuated are still without homes to return to and so cannot get back to work. Their employers are faced with months of cleanup. In addition to manpower, many don't yet have the tools and equipment to get running again.

Please don't give in to the talked-about "donor fatigue." This holiday season, revel in your blessings and be thankful. But don't forget to do your part for your less fortunate counterpart in the south. **See page 13 for information and directions on how you can help.**

I've heard it said that, when in the face of real tragedy, Americans hate to watch other Americans suffer. Thanks goodness for that!

— Don Doherty, Editor

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# It's a small world

## Federal prevailing wage law returns to ravaged Gulf Coast

After hurricane Katrina, President George W. Bush temporarily suspended the federal fair wage law known as the Davis-Bacon Act in areas affected by the hurricane, to save taxpayers money during the cleanup. The suspension ironically brewed another kind of storm as the Mechanical Contractors Association of America (MCAA) joined other construction industry groups to urge U.S. congressmen "to restore fair wages and Davis-Bacon Act average pay rates for emergency reconstruction work in the Gulf Coast (H.R. 3763/S. 1749)," an MCAA bulletin reported.

Offers of low-paying jobs and a sharp influx of illegal aliens presumably arriving to fill the jobs reportedly followed the controversial suspension. "A fair wage for hard and dangerous work is better policy than cutting standards," Alliance members told lawmakers. Their message was reinforced by at least one report, which demonstrated that a successful rebuilding effort following a 1994 California earthquake happened in part because "prevailing wage incentives were kept in place and expedited recovery performance."

In late October, President Bush rescinded the suspension, effective Nov. 8. A statement from Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.) following the reversal said the, "change of course by the White House is a significant victory for Louisiana workers and the basic American principles of fairness."

## MSCA STARS now number 40

The Mechanical Service Contractors of America (MSCA) officially inducted 20 more contractors as "MSCA STARS" at the group's recent annual educational conference in Vancouver, B.C., Canada. So far, 40 contractors across the country have joined the elite service group.

To apply for MSCA STAR qualification, a contractor must complete a detailed application and submit copies of its safety program, safety record, inventory control system, education and training pro-

grams for employees, customer service program, and letters of recommendation. An independent evaluation is performed by the National ITC Corporation of Los Angeles, CA.

## Construction industry seeking skilled managers

The lack of skilled managers was once again the leading challenge faced by contracting firms in the construction industry, according to the *FMI 2005-2006 U.S. Construction Industry Training Report*, a survey of contractors conducted annually by FMI. Having been among the top five concerns for several years, it is unlikely that this challenge will go away soon. The other top five challenges identified in the report include obtaining new work, lack of skilled labor, decreasing margins, and increased competition.

In addition to information about industry challenges, the *2005-2006 U.S. Construction Industry Training Report* examines a variety of topics including workforce trends; management and training challenges; trends in training; developing future leaders; high perform-



Rigging was one area of hands-on training that members of Chicago Women in Trades participated in while recently touring the apprentice school operated Pipe Fitters Local 597 of the Chicago area. This is the second time that instructors and women apprentices put in a Saturday morning to host the special open house for women interested in construction trades, an exercise designed to give them a taste of pipefitting. (photo by Rich Groves)

Trades Department, AFL-CIO, had been urging the Department of Labor (DOL) to remedy the problems that were occurring in nonunion programs.

The GAO investigation and report confirm the need for DOL remedial action. "We are pleased that the government's own investigative agency concurs with what our own reports have long been saying," stated Building Trades President Edward C. Sullivan. "Building and Construction Trades unions take pride in the fact that we invest hundreds of millions of dollars annually to ensure the highest standards of

skills training in every craft, and we continue to urge the Department of Labor to take action concerning programs that fall far short."

Among the key findings in the GAO report were that nonunion apprenticeship programs graduated only 30 percent of their apprentices in the period under study, significantly less than union programs. In addition, the GAO found that union apprentices were paid 24 percent more than nonunion apprentices when they began their apprenticeship, and they will earn 36 percent more when they finish their program.

The complete report is on the GAO website, at [www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov), and the Building and Construction Trades Department website, [www.bctd.org](http://www.bctd.org).

ance learning and development practices; incumbent worker training grants; and how companies are measuring training results.

For more information, contact Phil Warner at [pwarner@fminet.com](mailto:pwarner@fminet.com) or at (919) 785-9357.

## GAO report criticizes non-union apprenticeship programs

The Government Accountability Office (GAO), the federal government's top investigative agency, recently released a report confirming the existence of serious problems in nonunion apprenticeship programs, and in the Department of Labor's management of the nation's apprenticeship system. The Building and Construction

### The 2005 MSCA STARS

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## Tips from pros

### Four steps to working smarter

Industry-wide, 30 to 40 percent of direct labor hours are wasted spent moving materials from place to place, redoing work that was wrong, or standing around, according to FMI, management consultants to the construction industry. The first question most people ask is “why?” The instinctive response is to blame the fact that “We just can’t get good people anymore.”

Before jumping to that conclusion, take some time to analyze what causes delays and rework in the field, and why these situations occur. You will find that 80 to 90 percent of the problems are caused by poor management — most commonly associated with a lack of project planning, daily goal-setting and feedback/communication with the crews, and the failure to learn from our past successes and failures. Very few of the problems are caused by a lack of knowledge about how to do the job, or an unwillingness to perform.

To work smarter in your construction company, take the following four steps:

**1. Think before you leap into that job site.** Most owners are more concerned about your end date than your start date, and will understand your need to prepare if you just explain it to them.

**2. Management in the field.** Two- or three-week short interval schedules prepared by a superintendent and daily look-ahead plan prepared by foremen are critical to the productivity process. How can you have equipment, tools and materials

(Continued on page 5)

### Guest Commentary

# Making change the new status quo

By Mike Cullinane

Contractors with union tradespersons who work and do business in the Chicago area are fortunate. For more than a century Chicago has remained largely union. That fact, however, must never be taken for granted. As the market share of union contractors continues to erode, fresh ideas will increasingly be needed to stop (and more importantly) reverse the decline. This point was emphasized repeatedly last July at the Mechanical Contractors Association of America’s (MCAA) 2005 Summer Board of Director’s meeting.

MCAA Board members’ companies represent all facets of mechanical contracting and come from all areas of the country. The 24 board members and a few other industry leaders discussed ways to reverse market share declines. All agreed that progress will demand a cooperative effort between labor and management. An example of such cooperation may be seen in the CURT (Construction Users Roundtable) “Tripartite Initiative” (Summer 2004 edition *JobScope*). Here national union leaders (including the UA), trade associations (including MCAA), and construction users (owners) agreed to work aggressively to eliminate three of our industry’s biggest problems: *High Absenteeism*, *Extended Overtime*, and *Workplace Disruptions*. While administering a black eye to the union sector these problems, the longer they exist, are also helping introduce non-union contractors and tradesmen to traditionally union projects. The national Tripartite Agreement made to correct these three areas is an important first step; however, change must be implemented at the local level by unions and contractor groups to achieve any good.

The MCAA Board discussion was largely inspired by UA General President Bill Hite’s address to the MCAA convention last March. Mr. Hite was straightforward and brutally honest when he stated, “We felt we had inherent rights as union members, and noth-

ing would ever change — how wrong we were.” He also said: “We have to address issues as they arise in order not only to stop our market share from further erosion, but also to gain ground wherever and however we can.” Our goals are the same, but only through open and frank discussion will the necessary changes occur.

The work of CURT is ongoing. Their next two subjects to address are Drug Testing and Workplace Attitudes.

The MCAA Board expressed the opinion that, if we are to succeed, our industry must accept and execute CURT’s initiatives. They must become the norm in the future.

MCAA President Stanley Berger recently wrote: “It seems to me that contractor associations and unions alike must open their eyes and their ranks to new ideas and new people. It’s time to think not just outside the box, but outside the room the box is in.” In other words, we must recognize change, be creative and reject the notion of “business as usual.”

Union contractors’ most obvious advantage is the level of training and skill of UA pipefitters, plumbers, and sprinkler fitters. MCAA Board members repeatedly stressed the necessity of holding and strengthening that advantage. Continuing education for journeymen and supervisory personnel is just as critical as apprentice training. Let’s face it, the work we do is very complex and becoming more so all the time. Nobody is able to keep up with our rapidly changing technology without additional training. We cannot and should not wish away progress or be content with the status quo.

In Chicago the *training advantage* is

pronounced. Last spring Pipe Fitters Local Union 597 opened their expansive new training facility in Mokena, Illinois. Local 597 Business Manager Jim Buchanan is to be commended for his foresight and commitment to the future of the piping industry. All pipe fitters must see this facility as their home away from home. Training is not just for apprentices. This is really no different from the education offered by MCAA or its affiliates around the country. Whether the target audience is management, estimators, administrators or field crews, the concept is the same. **Education in our industry is essential** and must continue throughout the careers of everyone in the office and in the field.

Another serious topic the MCAA Board addressed was the overly contentious nature of negotiating local agreements. We often lose sight of the biggest obstacle to our success, namely non-union contractors and labor. Instead of truly studying our “real” opponent, we fall into the bad habit of competing against other union trades and other UA locals. Other unions (with a few notable exceptions) are not our competition, but non-union contractors surely are. Maybe we don’t like to study the “real” opposition because there is such a wide gap in wages and benefits, but collectively hiding our heads in the sand serves nobody’s best interests.

When we truly know the competition then we can begin to compete. There are ways to lower our crew costs without sacrificing hard earned wages and benefits, but changing our pre-set ideas and notions will be required. Long-range strategic thinking should always be present in our negotiations. In his address at the UA’s recent North American Pipe Trades Conference, 2001 MCAA President Smitty Belcher said, “If we claim jurisdiction of all the work, we must figure out a way to serve it all — past, present, and future.”



Personally, I've had the privilege of serving more than 10 years on the Local 597 Joint Apprenticeship Committee in Chicago. When we recruit young people into our industry we have

health and pension benefits and an improved standard of living. This is important for us all — new, younger workers and veterans alike.

At the center of O'Ryan's thesis is

**“The next few months and years will go a long way in determining the ultimate success or failure of our current way of doing business.”**

an obligation to their futures and this obligation should never be taken lightly. Elections are important and so is that next big job, but we should not sacrifice the future for expediency. It is not good enough to plan one to three years ahead.

The UA's Sean O'Ryan has written an important study titled *“The United Association in Transition, the Impact and Challenge of Demographics.”* In it he explains what challenges need to be addressed today. Those who fail to plan do so at their peril. When negotiations start with the goal of improving our industry for the long term we've gotten off to a good start. Improving our market share means more jobs, better

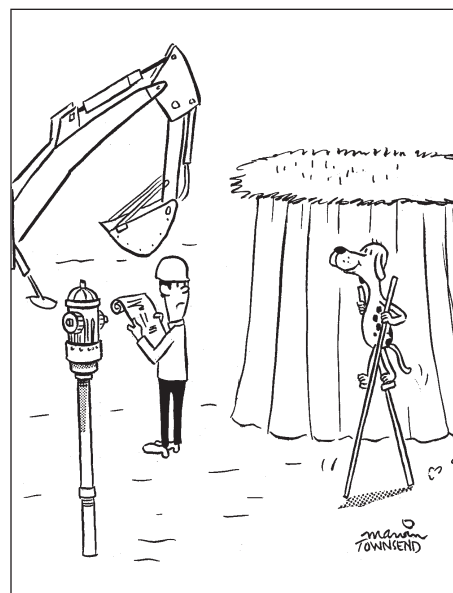
what he terms the *“Triple Effect,”* the convergence of 1) mass retirement of the Baby Boom generation, 2) increased demand for workers because of industry growth and 3) a diminished pool of *“traditional recruits.”* This enlightened approach of looking decades ahead is necessary if today's critical problems are to be tackled.

The next few months and years will go a long way in determining the ultimate success or failure of our current way of doing business. In Stanley Berger's words, *“If we are to meet these challenges — and the other challenges that will certainly occur — we must shrug out of the tight skin that history has placed on us and, with no precon-*

ceptions or philosophical constraints, adapt. Otherwise, we will take our place on the bone heap with the dinosaurs.”

Let's face it, we all have a vested interest in this industry and we all work for its success, but we haven't all worked together. This can and must change.

*Mike Cullinane (Bert C. Young & Sons Corp., Bellwood, Ill.) is President-Elect of the Mechanical Contractors Association of America.*



**Tips from pros**

*(Cont'd from page 4)*

available unless someone knows when they will be needed?

**3. Motivating your team.**

Using the short-interval schedule as a base, each crew should participate in setting goals for tomorrow. Measurement toward the progress of the crew should be on-going, and feedback provided. The foremen who spend 10 minutes a day goal setting and providing feedback and recognition to their crews will have motivated crews.

**4. Learning from your experiences.**

Use a post-job review process to discuss what we learned, and then communicate the lessons to your organization. Every job, good or bad, can teach us something, but unless we take the time to understand, we won't learn.

*(From past JobScope)*

*(Continued on page 11)*

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**New Orleans**

- Pipe Council of Greater New Orleans

**Wisconsin**

- Madison Area Mechanical & Sheet Metal Contractors Association
- Mechanical Contractors Association of Central Wisconsin

## Unions help members, families *(Continued from page 1)*

for weeks. The house, his pickup truck, clothes, furniture, food, valuables and memorabilia — everything was lost! The enormity of it slowly sinks in, he said. Even now, in the quieter moments of his day, the memories creep back.

“Probably the biggest thing you think about are the sentimental things at home that can’t be replaced. I had a baseball from my grandfather that was signed by Mickey Mantle and Stan Musial.” He figures it to be gone by now. He can’t help but pine a little now and then for his pickup truck, too, a 1998 F-150. “I loved my truck. Sometimes when you are just sitting around you think about these things.”

### Permanently temporary

Hurricane Katrina also temporarily shut down Colombo’s place of work, the union hall and training center for UA Local 60, in Metairie, La, west of New Orleans. For the next several weeks, work and home for Colombo were in the same place, but far from home: the training facility of Local 198 in Baton Rouge, La., some 75 miles to the northwest. There he moved in with his wife, Betty, his two sons, 8 and 6 years old,

and his parents. “Everybody is fine,” he said.

To their credit, three UA



(Left) Dana Colombo, an officer and organizer for Local 60 in New Orleans, poses with his father, Angelo. Colombo’s family, as well as the headquarters for the New Orleans local union, relocated to Baton Rouge temporarily after Hurricane Katrina.

local unions in the devastated region — Local 60, Local 198 and Local 568 (Gulfport, Miss.) — were quick to evaluate the severity of the situation there and come to the aid of union members and their families. The Baton Rouge Local, least affected by the storm, became the central

hands-on training. In their place are beds, showers, a laundry room. The large welding lab, in an adjacent building, now warehouses tons of donated food, clothing and cleaning supplies piled on pallets across the 250-foot building. The trucks with donated goods continue to arrive from cities

all over the country. From here supplies are distributed to evacuees who are still in the affected region. The smaller headquarters of Local Union 568 in Gulfport, Miss., has also become an emergency relief center for members there and in nearby Biloxi and Pascagoula. Sup-



Donated food, cleaning products and other goods are piled high across the floor and clothing is hung from curtain rods of welding booths at the training center of UA Local 198 in Baton Rouge, La.

plies are also warehoused at L.U. 568. In Baton Rouge, temporary office space was also set up for Local 60 until it was safe to return to Metairie. Here Colombo, an organizer, recording secretary and

trustee, joined L.U. 60 business manager Lance Albin, and president Rickey Fabra, putting in long hours in meetings and on the telephone, offering what help they could to stranded members. “I might hear from a member who is now in Chicago and asks, ‘I’m up here. You think you can call the business manager and see if they have any work available?’” He added that business managers from other UA locals have bent over backwards to help. “We’ve been fortunate, real fortunate,” he said.

At the end of the day, Colombo still goes home, but now it is merely steps away, where a classroom converted to a one-room apartment is his temporary home. His parents, Beverly and Angelo, a retired plumber, also live at the shelter.

The Colombo’s are joined at the shelter this day by apprentices Terrence Brown and Ulysess Payne and Donald Pugh, who plans to join the union. They are viewing pictures of the destruction in St. Bernard Parish on the internet, hoping to get a look at their neighborhood. Their homes there were flooded, their families scattered to other states for the time being.

Walter Tyson, a Local 60 pipe fitter who also sleeps at the shelter, waits for the day he’ll be permitted to return to his house in East Orleans Parish, which received some of the worst flooding. With him are his sister, Dianne, friend, Teofila Arana, and

two children. Walter goes to work each day at a shipyard in Jefferson Parish. Like so many others, they evacuated with just enough clothes and money to get by a few days. When the money ran out, they were forced to leave their hotel room in Houston



(Left to right) apprentices Terrence Brown and Ulysess Payne and friend Donald Pugh stay at the Local 198 relief center so they can continue to work. They are separated from family members who evacuated to other states after their homes, in St. Bernard Parish, were destroyed by floods.

and come back homeless and nearly broke.

What’s next for them? “We don’t know,” Walter and Dianna admit. “We are taking it one day at a time.

“When they let us back we can take a look at what we have left and find out what the insurance company is going to do,” Walter said. “Then we take it from there,” Dianne added. Four weeks later, Dianne still can’t believe all that’s happened. “I still can’t believe it!” How does one cope? “Hope and pray and be thankful that you got a bed to sleep in. It could be worse,” she said.

### Story the same in Mississippi

Getting in touch with members and contractors was also job number one for Local 568 in Gulfport, and

**“I have never been prouder to be associated with an organization like the UA.”**

according to Randall Carroll, one of the union’s organizers. A month after the storm, Carroll says they have contacted about 90 percent of their 350 members, but it hasn’t been easy without normal telephone service. “Retirees, for the most part, don’t use cell phones, so this was a problem,” he explained. There are about 80 retirees living in the area who rely on regular pension checks from the union to live.

Paychecks needed to get to those who were currently working. Contractors dropped off checks at the union hall while mail delivery was suspended. Other contractors called looking for workers. By the second week after the hurricane, Carroll said they were able to start dispatching workers. While the clean up goes on, Local 568 plumbers and pipe fitters are doing damage assessment work on the casino boats, for one, testing lines and equipment to determine if they are salvageable.



A sleeping area took over one of the training labs at Local 198 as the Baton Rouge local union became a relief center for UA members and their families affected by the storm.

The insides of the training school in Gulfport also look a lot different these days. Normal training equipment has been piled up in corners, making room for living space

and donated food and clothing. They are offering temporary shelter for anyone needing it. Carroll said a few members left the building earlier in the day with bags of donated food. He expects some apprentices about to return to the area to be sleeping here soon.

“This stuff is for our members to come and pick up. We want to take care of our members first, but if one has a brother or somebody who needs help, we tell them to just come and take what they need. We want to take care of our community too,” he said.

With less space in the smaller Gulfport facility, Carroll coordinates with the Baton Rouge local to replenish his stock. When supplies run low here, more is trucked in from Baton Rouge. Two of the United Association’s



(Left to right) Henry Heier visits Local 198 instructor Donnie Perault and training director Neal Miller, two UA members coordinating relief efforts for union members and the community.

mobile training trailers have been emptied and sent to Baton Rouge to facilitate the distribution of supplies.

Carroll said Local 568’s pipe fitters and plumbers work in the powerhouses, casinos, hotels, and other commercial facilities in the area. A smaller, separate local union handles shipbuilding work in Pascagoula, Miss. It was completely destroyed by hurricane Katrina. The union now barely operates from a trailer provided by the UA.

**Union connects with local relief effort**

Neal Miller, who in normal times is the training director for Local 198 in Baton Rouge, now directs relief center operations at the union. He said that as they have become confident of their ability to help union members, they are expanding their reach into the community. They are becoming partners to an extent of the American Red Cross, which is using the union’s organization, supplies and manpower

to augment their aid campaign in the area.

“It’s not just UA members we help,” Neal explained. “We are reaching out to the Red Cross, to FEMA.” He, Donnie Perault, a L.U. 198 instructor, and other volunteers have hauled supplies to shelters set up at churches in the community. “We are taking orders, boxing it and bringing it to them: food, water and clothing, anything they need,” Miller said.

Local 198 has also used the training facility, on more than one occasion, to issue Red Cross debit cards to hundreds of families in the community. “For many, it was the first aid they had received,” he said. The experience, however, turned out to be not only a labor of love but one of frustration, as the crowd size grew each time to numbers too big to handle. He said they are now working with the Red Cross to organize much larger distribution points, perhaps at a nearby football stadium, to handle much larger crowds.

Neal Miller, who is 43 and a native of Baton Rouge, is proud of the role his union is playing as a community relief organization and center. “I have never been prouder to be associated with an organization like the UA,” he said. He said the leadership and support from

the UA and its local unions around the country “has been spectacular.” From the start, the response from the General President, Bill Hite, and UA Training Director, Mike Arndt, has been “we’re behind you 100%, whatever you decide to do.”

A cell phone call to Miller interrupted the *JobScope* visit, at one point. The caller was Bob Mullen, a retired business agent and pipe fitter in Local 537 in Boston, Mass. Mullen had developed a relationship with Miller and Local 198 as the Boston local union had hosted travelers from Baton Rouge in the past. He called Miller this Monday evening to wish everyone here well and announce that the Boston local union would donate \$20,000 to a disaster relief fund set up by the union. “We try to help our own,” Mullen said.

Miller said the relief fund is off to a good start with donations from several locals, including his own which contributed \$50,000. It’s money that is sorely needed to help unions and contractors throughout the devastated region get back on their feet and rebuild. And

trusted to people with the spirit and determination of Neal Miller and others mentioned here, it’s likely every dollar will get where it is really needed and make a real difference.



“Baton Rouge or Bust” reads the spare tire cover on this trailer that arrived from New York as a gift to the local relief effort there.

## Katrina (Continued from page 8)

somewhere in Gulfport: “There are not suitable words to accurately convey the scope and severity of devasta-



The depth and force of surge water from Katrina is registered on the brick walls of this funeral home across the street from the Gulf.

tion visited upon this place. There is no camera lens big enough to record it all.”

Standing perhaps in the same spot almost four weeks after Katrina (and one day after hurricane Rita ripped the western Louisiana-Texas coast), I fully understand the reporter’s remark. Scattered debris covers the narrow street down which we pick our way, dodging tree limbs, overturned automobiles, wrecked houses and much of what was inside them.

Through the blown-out ground floor of a funeral home, I can see white caps atop the Gulf of Mexico this hot, breezy afternoon and hear the surf as it rolls ashore a city block away. The clean up in this place has barely begun. Reminders of Katrina’s tantrum are everywhere.

Before sunrise on the morning of Aug. 29, the Gulf of Mexico roared ashore here, with a record surge that esti-

mates put in excess of 30 feet. The floodwater’s force is registered on buildings like the funeral home and countless others facing the beach along Route 90. Washed away were the four brick walls and every utility, every furnishing inside. The steel columns that support the upper floors were all that remained, giving it the look of a structure built on stilts. It’s a picture I would see repeated in hotels, condominiums and stately southern



Overturned, crushed automobiles and boats were common sites among the debris left in devastated landscapes along the Gulf coastline.

mansions for miles along the coastal highway.

The hurricane was less merciful to residential homes within walking distance of the Gulf. Only a few are left standing. Through a sea of wreckage on one block a small concrete porch is all that has survived. It is the only thing left to mark the house of Mike (Mule) Locklin, a veteran member and current treasurer of U.A.

Local 568. One of my tour guides on this day, Locklin, 58, points to a partially standing house down the street. He says the owner, who did not evacuate, told him that as he looked out his window he thought he saw Mule’s house implode as the surge water charged inland.

For Mule, a living example that lightning *does* strike twice in the same place, Katrina was devastation revisited on a home that had burned on Christmas Day 2003. It had been recently rebuilt only to be lost again. “He was fixing to have a house warming,” joked another member of the tour group.

Mule now lives with his mother further inland in Gulfport. The living arrangements for most other members of our 5-man touring party — Randall, Chip, Henry, even myself — were also changed, if not downgraded,



Across the street from one of the wrecked casino barges along the Biloxi shore are (left to right) “Mule” Locklin, Randall Carroll, Chip Barnes, and Henry Heier.

by Katrina.

**Randall Carroll’s** home in Latimer, 15 miles inland, was spared by Katrina but not untouched. “We didn’t have power. Power lines were down everywhere. There was



The storm spared nothing in its path, not even the former home of Jefferson Davis, the civil war Confederacy’s only president. The national historical landmark was seriously damaged.

still water around, but we were dry inside,” he explained. “I had to cut trees out of my driveway so I could get in and out. We had to get a generator hooked up and running so we could at least get the house cooled for my mother who is elderly,”

he said. Several other family members also took refuge in his home. Those lucky enough to have generators, however, didn’t find it easy to get the fuel necessary to run them, as local gas stations were either without power and closed, operating with absurdly long lines, or completely out of gas. Randall, who is an organizer for Local 568 and an officer for the Tri States

Pipe Trades Association, said that once the gas situation was under control, he could turn his attention to work and union matters.

Before the storm, Wallace (**Chip**) Barnes, a union elec-

trician, gathered his wife, father-in-law, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, his son and two grandchildren and drove to Mobile, Ala. When it had passed, he returned to Biloxi to find his home still standing. Others in his family were not as fortunate. Now all are

living under his roof and helping each other through the crisis. “I thank God that He left one house in the fam-

he entered for the first time were enough to make him close the door and walk away realizing he was not yet ready



A hurricane-wracked casino barge now rests along the wrong (north) side of coastal Route 90, opposite the Gulf and about a mile from its berth.

ily standing so we could all have a place to go and stay dry,” he said.

**Henry Heier**, administrator of the Pipe Council of Greater New Orleans, was living in a 117-year-old house in downtown New Orleans before the hurricane forced him and his wife, Amelie, to evacuate. They drove as far as Memphis to find an available hotel room. Almost a month after the flood, Henry still waits for New Orleans to

reopen its door to evacuees eager to find out what’s left. He’s had one brief look since the floodwaters receded, but it was cut short when patrolling national guardsmen discovered him and promptly escorted him away. He remembers that the sight and smell of the place when

to face it. Since then, Henry has spent his nights in a townhouse that belonged to his recently deceased father in St. Tammany Parish on the north side of Lake Pontchartrain. While the floodwater



One month after the hurricane, the roads are clear but the real clean up is just getting underway in this part of Gulfport.

missed it, the wind blew off part of the roof letting in damaging rain.

Henry’s parlor couch is where I sleep during my visit, as hotel rooms are impossible to find anywhere within a day’s drive of New Orleans.

The tour began at Local 568’s union hall and appren-

tice training school in Gulfport, Miss. Businesses on both sides of the highway, as we drove south, displayed wounds inflicted by Hurricane Katrina — broken glass, torn roofs, partially destroyed walls. There were many other vehicles out this afternoon driven by relief crews, utility workers, insurance adjusters, and police. They also carried survivors getting on with the business of cleaning up. Handling the most routine tasks — grocery shopping, getting gas, picking up mail — now required more time and effort. Most stores were closed. Those that were open had “Help Wanted” signs posted prominently in their windows. Normal mail delivery was still suspended in many areas; you now went to the post office to pick it up and usually waited in long lines of cars.

The devastation grew worse the closer we got to the coast. Debris lay in heaps. Heading east to Biloxi, we witnessed one example after another of this hurricane’s incredible fury. Many structures remained standing, but looked months, if not years, away from recovery. In between,

them slabs with bits of foundations were all that remained of buildings erased by the storm. Small boats and large ones drifted inland on the surge, resting wherever the receding water left them — in backyards, behind schools, in the middle of a road as was the case with one

large casino barge that was dynamited recently to clear the way. It was one of a half dozen casino boats along the Biloxi strip whose moorings were severed by the hurricane and hulls floated far from their berth.



The beached “Luna Sea,” now resting somewhere in downtown Biloxi, seems to make its own statement about life after the storm.

Security was visible along this blighted stretch of coast that had grown into America’s third most popular gambling destination, behind Las Vegas and Jersey City, N.J. From Gulfport to Biloxi, checkpoints manned by national guardsmen worked with patrolling Humvees and police cruisers and to keep unwanted people out. Randall affixed magnetic signs to the sides of our two vehicles, identifying us as disaster relief contractors. They were our passes to enter the disaster zone.

The eastern leg of our tour ended at the (almost) brand new Hard Rock hotel and casino in downtown Biloxi. Only two days from its grand opening when Katrina called, the hotel now might more aptly be named “Hard Luck.” Like its neighbors along the strip, it’s sta-

tus now one of emergency repair and rebuilding. Randall Carroll said mechanics from the union are testing plumbing and piping lines on the bottom three floors for leaks before they can be recertified. From the street,

the hotel doesn’t look too worse for the wear. However, behind it where the water meets the building, the picture gets ugly. Here the completed 300-foot casino barge was blown away from the main deck up. What remains of the hull is pushed off its concrete cradle and lists badly to one side — a total loss!

It’s anyone’s guess how long it will take for the Hard Rock to actually hold its grand opening — or for the other victims of Hurricane Katrina to return to normal. The hotels and gaming industry have maintained their pledge to see through it

*(Continued on page 13)*



This wrecked mansion near the Gulfport coast carries a warning to thieves — “You loot, we shoot!” — presumably spray painted by its evacuated owners.

# Prospect of building boom urging contractors to get back online

Gallo Mechanical, one of New Orleans' biggest mechanical contractors, was also one of the city's busiest on August 26. David Gallo, the company's president, counted 16 active projects the Friday before the arrival of Hurricane Katrina. He said the company employed some 100 pipe fitters and plumbers from UA Local 60 in New Orleans and a few from neighboring Local 568 in Gulfport, Miss.

The beginning of the next work week, however, everything came to a swift and complete halt in a most unbelievable way. Gallo surely expected some level of damage from the hurricane. But he was totally unprepared for the whopper administered when the levee gave way submerging his home and his business under several feet of water for almost a month.

"Our office space was totally wiped out," Gallo said.

The 24 computer workstations and 3 servers, desks, chairs, files, drawings: all were on the first floor. Outside the office the news was worse. More than a third of Gallo's 33 vehicles were sunk up to their dashboards and declared a total loss. Washed away also were hand tools and lots of equip-

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**"Our biggest obstacles have been lack of tools, lack of vehicles, the transportation around the city and logistics of getting to work, and fuel shortages. Then you go into the personal things. It's just beyond belief."**

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ment, from welding machines to forklifts, left on job sites around New

Orleans. The company's new satellite office in Gulfport, which sustained significant wind and water damage from Hurricane Katrina, is also shut down. On Saturday, Sept. 24, Gallo talked to *JobScope*, recalling the trials of the past four weeks. He is still very much in an emergency response mode, striving to bring his beleaguered business back to normal. Surprisingly, the company is working today, but on a limited scale and from a temporary, somewhat scattered home office. Gallo's desk today is in office space belonging to B&C Sheet Metal, Inc., in Denham Springs, La., 75 miles away. His friend, Jimmy Clark, freed enough space for a

desk for David Gallo and his accounting staff. Clark, the president of B&C, also helped Gallo find an apartment in the area and a rental car — no small task after the storm.

Needless to say, Gallo's projects in New Orleans

went on the hold while the city dries out. Three of their larger projects, a couple hospital jobs and a movie theater, however, were not shut down by the

we were," Gallo explained.

"We're very proud of our organization. We actually had the checks to employees a week later than they were supposed to. And since then we have been working regularly, getting paid."

Except for one brief visit to recover some critical records, with a police escort in tow, Gallo hasn't returned to his New Orleans office on Agricultural Street, where the area remained under lock



David Gallo (right) uses temporary office space to discuss recovery plans with field crew members as they struggle to get back to work after Hurricane Katrina.

hurricane. So there has been work at least for workers who stayed in the area.

Gallo opened the temporary office on Sept. 1, installed new computers and got right to work putting out the first payroll, on Sept. 9,

down. Until they can get back there and establish some kind of temporary quarters, they have had to scatter much of their office staff to other locations. At the theater job site, in Covington, La., for example, they've set

up their operations center in a trailer.

Gallo has ordered enough trailers for 2,400 square feet of temporary office space that he plans to use until his permanent office can be restored. He

hopes to be set up here in a few weeks, if possible, when he believes work in New Orleans might begin coming



Rubber gloves and boots have become basic protective equipment for getting around the office and shop of Baudier Mechanical Contractors, Inc., in Chalmette, La. When authorities opened St. Bernard Parish again to survivors, a month after the storm, Bob and Cheri Baudier were back to retrieve records and assess the damage from flooding.



These filing cabinets were among the few things the Baudiers found in their original position after the six feet of floodwater receded.

using checks borrowed also from the sheet metal contractor. "We had no checks. Our bank was swamped just like

back. In the meantime, he has been fortunate and grateful for all the help, big and small, he has gotten from people inside and outside his organization.

“Our biggest obstacles have been lack of tools, lack of vehicles, the transportation around the city and logistics of getting to work, and fuel shortages. Then you go into the personal things. It’s just beyond belief. Just getting to work in the morning became an issue,” Gallo said.

“I’ve got some fantastic people. They’ve been unbelievable, finding a way to do things and put out extra effort everywhere,” he added. One of Gallo’s estimators, a Local 60 member, returned to work in the field using his own tools. “People have opened their houses to others needing shelter,” Gallo noted. Workers have helped transport each other to work.

His professional peers have also come to the rescue. Friends from six mechanical contracting firms around the country, who know David Gallo through volunteer service in the Mechanical Contractors Association of America (MCAA), sent trucks, tools and equipment to Gallo Mechanical. Additionally, they all flew to Houston one weekend to sit down with David Gallo and map out an emergency recovery plan for the company. Gallo is grateful for the help from his friends at Advance Mechanical Systems, Inc. in Mt. Prospect, Ill.; Humphrey

Company, Inc., Houston, Texas; Hussung Mechanical Contractors, Inc., Louisville, Ky.; NewMech Companies, Inc., St. Paul., Minn.; Postler & Jaeckle Corporation, Rochester, N.Y.; and Smith & Oby Company, Cleveland,

in a parking lot in Mandeville, La., for the trip across Lake Pontchartrain to visit the office of Baudier Mechanical Contractors Inc., in St. Bernard Parish. It is the first day authorities permit residents to return, but only for the day to have a look at their property. They must leave before sundown, as the area still is without electricity and water.

All four of us fit comfortably into the roomy pickup truck belonging to Robert and Cheri Baudier. Like

Gallo, the Baudiers lost it all when hurricane Katrina came calling. Their business, located in Chalmette, was underwater for weeks. The first floor of their seaside home in East New Orleans was washed away as was a new house they were building across Lake Pontchartrain.



The flood wreaked its own brand of havoc in this parts storage room at Baudier Mechanical Contractors in St. Bernard Parish.

Ohio.

Gallo said money donated by MCAA has enabled them to provide emergency money to employees on top of assistance received from FEMA and the American Red Cross. He added that the unions also came up with money to help members relocate and get back on their feet.

How has Gallo Mechanical fared compared to their competitors? “Everybody is in the same boat,” he said. “We’ve lost our offices and our homes — all they can be is as bad as me. I hope they are better off.”

### After the floodwater went away

Bright and early Monday morning, Sept. 26, we meet



If you think cleaning away the dry mud is all that’s needed here, think again. All the company vehicles and digging equipment were underwater for days and likely rendered a total loss.

The water also destroyed their Ford Thunderbird and Jeep Cherokee, parked outside their office.

But they are grateful they are alive and safe, and they are determined to survive

what’s ahead.

A few soldiers and police officers guard a checkpoint as we enter the Causeway bridge over the lake. The bumper-to-bumper column of cars inches ahead, but as we get over the lake traffic opens up. Miles to our left, the booms of large cranes are visible atop the Interstate 10 bridge, replacing sections of road damaged by the surge. It is expected to reopen soon.

The Baudiers are slowly getting back to work. Before the hurricane, they had 20 employees. Almost everyone evacuated the area, and many remain scattered as far away as Denver and Iowa. The remodeling jobs they worked on, in hotels, schools and other institutions in New Orleans, have been put on hold.

“We are trying to get other workers back but it’s hard, Cheri said. “They don’t have any way of coming back, they don’t have any place to live,” Bob added. While FEMA amasses the trailers, real estate and infrastructure for large-scale “temporary communities” are desperately needed to house workers for the rebuilding effort. It’s anybody’s guess when and if that will happen. Henry Heier said large tracts of land were now being bulldozed to prepare these “mega-trailer parks.”

The Baudier’s current living space is in an old bank building that was turned into a nursery. They are joined there by two of their friends, who actually found the space from

*(Continued on page 12)*

## Tips from pros

*(Cont’d from page 5)*  
When knowledge goes hand-in-hand with technique

Welding skills and technique are only a small part of being a skilled MIG and Flux Cored Arc Welder (FCAW). The true test for any tradesman is how well they understand the tools they use, says Ed Craig, welding consultant, trainer and quality control expert. With stick and TIG welding, setting parameters is simple — after all, you only have one parameter to control “current.” With MIG and FCAW, the process, equipment and consumables used demand greater understanding.

For many MIG welders, setting the MIG equipment means setting the wire feed control to an existing pen mark on the wire feeder. Many welders also set parameters simply by the sound of the arc. Ask 10 welders to provide you with the wire feed speed, volts, and amps for a common 0.035 MIG wire for a spray transfer 1/4 fillet weld, and I guarantee the 10 answers you get will shock you! *(From past JobScope)*

## Golden rule of hydronics

**If you can’t find the time to do it right, you’ll never find the time to do it twice.**

Think about this Golden Rule the next time you’re tempted to take a shortcut. Manufacturers print those instructions for a reason, and if you choose to ignore them, you’re probably going to get a callback or two...or three. Got time for callbacks? *(From Dan Holohan’s “Golden Rules” handbook, www.HeatingHelp.com)*

## Contractors *(Continued from page 11)*

their boss. Bob, a plumber, constructed a makeshift shower. "Now it is a refugee camp," he joked.

### A moldy mess

My first thought as we arrived at the company office is: "Not too bad." The walls and roof are still there. The open windows are unbroken. Warned about entering the office with boots on, the only protection I can cobble together to protect my sneakers are two plastic bags held fast around my ankles with duct tape. Not exactly OSHA-compliant, I decide, but they work.

Once inside, the trick to keeping your balance, and your plastic boots, is to walk slowly through the black,

Even though windows were wide open for days, the smell is overpowering.

Besides a flood, the place looks like an earthquake hit it. Chairs are no longer where they belong but upside down in opposite corners or other rooms. Telephones, computer terminals, wastebaskets are tipped over, damp and mud coated. Drawings, binders and records are spread everywhere. I pause to help Cheri yank open a file drawer at one desk. It takes all four hands and arms.

The damage and confusion are equally apparent in the shop area where cans, bottles, boxes and other small items settled wherever the receding water dropped them. In a parts storage area,

boxes used to organize fittings have floated off their shelves spilling their con-

tents on the muddy floor.

The sludge near the open garage door and in the yard is dried and cracked, almost hard enough to

greasy sludge, 3-4 inches deep, that has settled on the floor. Signs of mold and mildew are everywhere. The water line on the wall, about six feet high, can be traced by the mold growing beneath it.



Arc Mechanical, another contractor located in St. Bernard Parish, bears extensive wind damage to the outside of the building. (Inset) Mardi Gras beads are among refuse hanging from barbed wire at the yard entrance at Arc Mechanical.



Shut down for weeks, St. Bernard Parish is a muddy mess, as indicated by this evacuated shopping center one month after Hurricane Katrina battered the region and sent devastating floodwaters that overcame the levee protecting the parish.

walk on. The company trucks, bobcat and forklift parked outside are total losses, I am told.

Afterwards I wonder out loud how best to handle the clean up inside: what has to happen first, how long it will take to scoop all the sludge off the floor. Bob doesn't seem to even want to venture a guess. He can't bring himself to think of it yet, perhaps still consumed with other tasks that must come first or how he is going to find the help that will be necessary to pull it all off.

Like many contractors here, the Baudiers need help quickly to get back on their feet. Up to now, the federal government, through FEMA, seems to have concentrated its resources on helping the poorest. However, the lack of any attention toward the business community, I sense, is becoming a source of frus-

tration. The Baudiers have contacted their insurance company to review their coverage, but their claim and check will take time. Cheri applied for a Small Business Administration loan one week after the disaster, but hasn't yet received a reply.

"Our main concern is getting the company back up and running," Cheri said. "We need someplace to work out of."

Since the storm the hours of each day are consumed dealing with a multitude of issues that need decisions right away. "We've gone from one idea to the next idea," Bob said. "You couldn't sleep at night, constantly thinking about things and wondering, do we go this way or that way?"

"And we have people who depend on us," Cheri said. "I

want our guys to come back. We had some good people." They continue to keep in touch with workers who have relocated.

"It's a slow procedure because there are a lot of things you need to get back in business. You need vehicles, you need clerks, you need manpower, you need food. You need everything when you start from scratch," Bob explained.



"Wrench? I thought you said you wanted a left-handed monkey!"

## Katrina (Continued from page 9)

and rebuild. That is good news for the people whose livings rely on the hundreds of jobs brought to the area, and it's good news for the state of Mississippi, which derives a significant portion of its tax income from the coastal resort district. However, the resort companies want to build land-based casinos in the future. Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour petitioned the state legislature for a new law striking the requirement that gambling facilities be built on watercraft. Future casinos will now be on dry land, as long as they are within 800 feet of the water.

### What Katrina could not conquer

Leaving the Hard Rock, we head north away from the disaster zone. I suspect we are close to the Alabama state line and ask. Mobile, in fact, is a little ways east, I am told, but we cannot get there from here as the bridge was destroyed by the hurricane. We soon leave the highway and enter a residential area. This neighborhood seems to have come through the storm well. The homes are modest and well kept. The streets still have standing trees. We pull into the driveway of one of the homes, belonging to Chip, and leave our vehicles. At the front porch of the small wooden house, we are warmly greeted by Karnmen, Chip's wife, and Wilfred

Wade and his wife, Karnmen's parents. They invite us into their den.

Wade, 83, takes his place in a comfortable chair by the door. His wife sits next to him. He is dressed very well



(Right) Wilfred Wade and son-in-law Chip Barnes visit with *JobScope* and other guests touring parts of Biloxi in Katrina's path. Wade, 83, is a retired pipe fitter and business manager of UA Local 568 in Mississippi. He has benefitted from many helping hands in his family and the union since losing his home in the storm.

today in his Sunday best, I note, and grateful for the visitors who have come. (In spite of the fact that he is not in his own house nor is he wearing his own clothes, I later learn.)

Wade jokes with everyone in our party, some of whom he knows from the union. The retired business manager of Local 568 enjoyed a long career as a pipe fitter and plumber, a life that began after military service in World War II.

Living near the Gulf most of his life, Wade is no stranger to hurricanes. You hide out someplace safe for a few days and then come home, clean up. Afterwards life goes on for those who live here. That's the way it is.

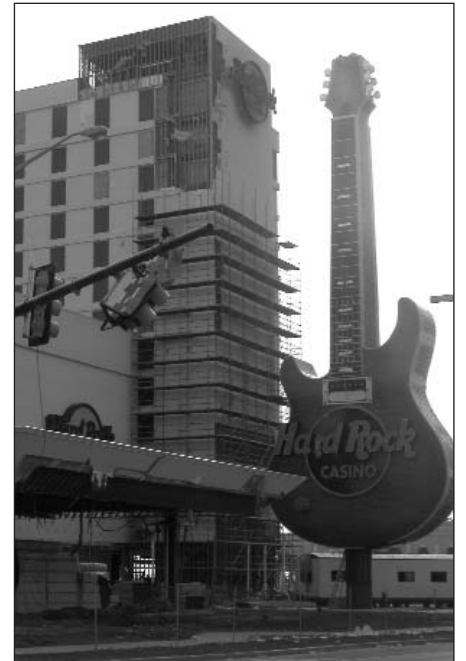
But every once in awhile a *Katrina* comes along and

takes away everything you have...or does it? It's when things are at their worst that people so often are their best. Most things that can be replaced, in time, usually are. And the irreplaceable becomes even more precious. Those who survive a catastrophe like Katrina feel people draw nearer and in so doing grow dearer. There is evidence throughout the day to support this.

Today the old man focuses, it seems, on his blessings. He is thankful, he says, for the clothes, food and support that he's received from his union, which has set up disaster relief efforts for people like him who need a little

help. He is also thankful for the family that has taken him under their roof — and, at his age, for the joyful gift of living another day. Many members of this very challenged but determined group I have met share his sentiments.

When the visit is over, I am invited to return. I offer a promise to do so. It will be something to see, I think, how they overcome this setback and restore this beautiful place. And something to celebrate.



The newly built Hard Rock Hotel and Casino was three days away from its grand opening and becoming the newest addition to the Biloxi strip when Hurricane Katrina struck.

## How you can help

### Mechanical contractors and their UA members in the Gulf Coast

Something construction people seem to fear the least are obstacles. And the single thing they enjoy the most is building things. Give them the tools, materials and plans and let them work. A good crew will get the job done, along the way solving every problem they encounter. The spirit behind this shows itself over and over. Consider the following: Among the stories Lance Albin, business manager of UA Local 60 in New Orleans, recalled from his members who fled Hurricane Katrina finding help from other UA local unions far from home was this one. An evacuee was asked at a union meeting of his hosts if there was anything he needed. He said he lost his work boots in the storm. "What size?" a voice in the crowd asked. "Eight and a half," he replied. The next thing he noticed were a pair of work boots being passed with raised hands to the front of the room. They were size 8-1/2, and were produced as quickly as it took for someone to remove them.

It's this spirit you can be sure will show up when the time comes to rebuild the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast. But will there be enough skilled workers, with the tools and materials necessary to get the job done? These are big questions right now, as mechanical contractors struggle to rebuild and get their workers home

and back to work. There will be no shortage of construction work here for a long time; this much is obvious. And whoever can provide the skilled workforce that will be needed is likely to get the work. These are the challenges for both the union and non-union sectors, and now is the time to prepare.

#### Please help in any way you can!

The **MCAA Member Relief Fund**, set up by the Mechanical Contractors Association of America, has already collected more than \$300,000 to aid contractors on the Gulf Coast. These funds are being put to direct use to help contractors rebuild their business and assist their employees. Checks made out to the **MCAA Member Relief Fund** should be mailed to John R. Gentile, Executive Vice President & CEO, MCAA, 1385 Piccard Drive, Rockville, MD 20850.

The **United Association** is also directing relief efforts to UA members affected by Hurricane Katrina. In addition to cash contributions, donations of food, clothing and other needed supplies are being dispatched to UA relief centers in the Gulf Coast region. For information on how you can support the UA's relief efforts, visit their website at: [www.ua.org](http://www.ua.org).

## A WORD ABOUT WELDING



# New and unique standard to address welding and performance specs for plastic pipe

The baby boom generation witnessed the entry and early growth of plastic in manufactured products. Perhaps nowhere was its impact more recognized than in automobiles, where the shiny chrome trim, grill, and hubcaps that adorned American cars through most of the 1960s gave way to plastic substitutes that were lighter, less expensive, and rust-free. The process continues today as better, stronger plastics appear in countless consumer and industrial products.

Can plastics play a larger role in pipe in the future? There is one international group of people that believe the future is already here. The applications for thermoplastic

pipe are no longer limited to gas distribution, high purity water, pharmaceutical processing or other small-diameter systems. They have spread into larger diameter hot and chilled water piping, for example.

As thermoplastic pipe finds more and more uses, the specifications and installation requirements will also grow. The above international group came together to write a standard for welding procedures and performance tests for those who join plastic pipe. It is the first of its kind in the U.S. The "Consensus Group" consists of chemical engineers, mechanical engineers, Ph.D.s, an insurance person, and a member of the



(Right) Brian MacDonald and Reinhard Hanselka, members of the standards committee, were on the instructional staff at the 2005 UA Annual Instructor Training Program. Hanselka, a chemical engineer and national consultant, has played a role in the development of tools and machinery used to join plastic pipe.

British Welding Institute. Their current chairman is Brian MacDonald, a special representative for the United Association.

While thermoplastic pipe has been around a long time, there has never been a standard for it. "What you've always seen is something like, 'See manufacturer's recommended practice.' This was the statement you would see in bidding documents," MacDonald said.

The American Welding Society (AWS) has reviewed the first standard developed by the Consensus Group. MacDonald said a second standard will tackle chemical fusion and other issues. "Now we'll do a socket fusion, solvents in the chemical joint. And that will start incorporating the plumbing more. Then we are looking at the structural," he said.

What is the UA's stake in the new standards?

"Basically, we are looking at a tremendous amount of work that is going to be in this stuff. I am reasonably sure that pretty soon you'll see all the condenser water, chilled water, cooling towers — everything being done in plastic," MacDonald said.

"I think you are going to see what happened to the plumber with plastics happen to the pipe fitter soon," he added.

When the rules change and require pipe fitters to be qualified to join plastic pipe — and change is on the horizon — MacDonald wants to make sure the union is ready to train and test UA welders.

"We can qualify our people," he said. "We're way into it; we have been for quite awhile." MacDonald said some states already have laws

requiring that all pipe carrying materials hazardous to the environment or the human body to be joined by qualified welders. He expects more states to follow.

"We are trying to prepare

ourselves," MacDonald said. The UA's Annual Instructor Training Program last August in Ann Arbor, Mich., included courses preparing instructors to teach in three areas of thermoplastic pipe welding. The information and training techniques they learned here they'll take back to their local unions.

MacDonald said an important challenge for pipe fitters working with thermoplastic pipe is that it has higher expansion characteristics than metal. Installers will have to allow for greater expansion, which will affect hanger spacing, for one.

In addition to technical knowledge, some individuals will need a degree of attitude adjustment. MacDonald realizes there is still a lot of resistance to plastic pipe out there. "A lot of contractors don't understand it and don't have faith in it," he said. "So the philosophy has to change a little first."



Gregory A. Doyle, a training instructor for Local Union 60, New Orleans, demonstrates the process and equipment used to join thermoplastic pipe for lead instructor Rob Blanton (right) and others at the UA's school for trainers in Ann Arbor, Mich.



# NDT national agreement represents union workers in growing new field

By William P. Hite, UA  
General President

*This is the seventh, and final, in a series of JobScope articles about new and updated national labor agreements of the United Association. These articles explain what the agreements cover, their purpose, and how they can make union workers and their employers more competitive.*

Non-destructive testing (NDT) of pipe welds is nothing new. Who is performing the tests, however, is changing. Since the UA identified NDT as a new opportunity for employment of its members, more UA members have become certified NDT technicians. A few years ago, the UA, working with the International Brotherhood of Boil-

the United States (QCCUS) to administer their responsibilities under the agreement.

The national NDT agreement covers all the standard areas found in similar labor agreements — like scope of work, rights and responsibilities of all parties, wages and benefits, and handling of disputes. It also addresses areas unique to this type of work.

Like all specialties, non-destructive testing requires technicians who have had a significant amount of special training and certification. NDT technicians strive to master three testing methods — radiography, ultrasonics, or eddy current — as they advance through the levels of accomplishment. A Level I technician has a Level 1 certi-

employees,” must be able to supply a sufficient number of qualified workers to fill all the job opportunities. If they are unable to refer enough qualified technicians, the employer may seek workers from other sources.

The agreement allows for applicable testing, if needed, to be administered by the owner or contractor. It also allows for a probationary status of all new employees for up to 30 days.

Employers have the right to determine the size of the workforce, equipment and materials, and methods and techniques of work. However, they cannot establish new classifications, pay rates or conditions related to any new processes without first bar-

gaining with the unions.

Wage rates are based on the geographical location of the work and not the location of the

employer. Overtime work, performed beyond the standard 8-hour shift, or on weekends and holidays, is paid at 1-1/2 the normal hourly rate. The employer also pays for health and life insurance benefits through the shop plan (Plan M) of the Boilermakers for all their workers, regardless of union affiliation, during employment.

For UA members, employers contribute to the UA pension fund, as well as a separate NDE Joint Training Fund, which establishes new training programs related to



This x-ray cabinet, at the UA Western Regional Training Facility in Colton, Calif., is used in part to train union members in non-destructive testing.

non-destructive testing. Employers also pay into the Non-Destructive Testing Communications and Productivity Fund, a new trust to promote the non-destructive testing industry.

In line with other national labor agreements developed by the UA, the NDT agree-

ment prohibits any work stoppages, slow downs, strikes or lockouts. Instead a grievance and arbitration procedure is set up to allow both parties to work out a fair solution in an expeditious manner, “so that work may be done efficiently and without interruption.”

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**“Since the UA identified NDT as a new opportunity for its members, more UA members have become certified NDT technicians.”**

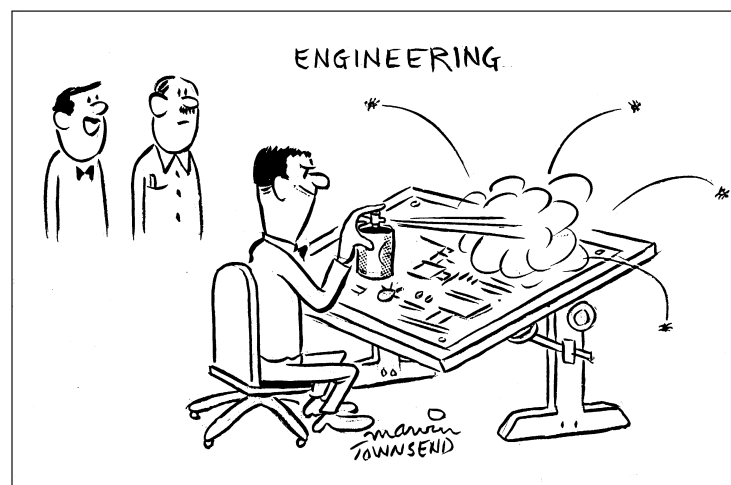
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ermakers, established a joint labor agreement setting fair terms of employment for members of both unions doing NDT work.

The general presidents of both unions, representing the labor side, originally signed the agreement in the fall of 1991. Signatures of officers of the Non Destructive Testing Contractors Association (NDTCA), representing employers, also appeared on the document. The NDTCA acts as the employers’ agent. The two unions created the Quality Control Council of

fication in at least one of the three methods. A Level IIb technician has achieved the higher Level II certification. The Level IIa technician has earned Level II certification in two testing methods. The NDT Level III technician has the highest rank. (The NDT agreement also applies to helper/trainee members in the work crew.)

Employers, who make the hiring decisions, must look at the training and certification levels of prospective workers. The unions, which have rights as “first source of



“He likes to get all the bugs out before we start on a job!”



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