

# **messenger**

**MIDWEST INSULATION CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION**

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**OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68130**



**VOLUME 55 NO. 06**  
**JUNE 2021**



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- Producer Prices for Construction Materials and Services Jump 24 Percent Over 12 Months, Threatening Contractors' Solvency and Workers' Jobs.
- About NIA's 65th Annual Convention.
- Statement by U.S. Secretary of Labor on the May Jobs Report.

## **UPDATE ON MICA ACTIVITIES**

In normal years, we would have just concluded our spring convention and I would be reporting on all of the activities of the convention. But this is not a normal year. One year ago we were just getting a sense of what COVID-19 was and the potential disruption that it could cause for all of us. Your Board of Directors were diligent in their approach to bringing us back together in a face to face meeting. The health and safety of you, the members, took precedence over scheduling an in person meeting too soon with too many uncertainties still in play. We delayed another spring convention this year.

The pandemic robbed Steve Sack from experiencing his inaugural convention and presiding over his last convention as MICA President. But COVID did make his year as president a one of a kind presidency. He provided MICA with a leadership quality that allowed us to withstand the effects of a year that we do not want or need to repeat.

Steve has graciously passed the leadership mantle to Rudy Nigl effective June 24, 2021. You will see a new face and a new President's message in this newsletter. We will recognize Steve for his year of service at our fall business meeting in October along with catching up with other association activities that normally are conducted at the June convention. We will recognize the "Best Practices in Safety" award winners for both 2020 and 2021. The deadline for submitting your safety award application for this year was June 25, 2021. We will elect our new Board members in October and we will showcase the 9th edition of the MICA standards manual. The **9th edition will be printed and available for purchase in July.**

The Board of Directors will be conducting their summer planning meeting this August 1 — 3, 2021, in Duluth, MN. The Board's agenda will include the review of MICA's financial operations and the formal election of officers. The transition committee will present their findings regarding the selection process for identifying a new Executive Secretary for MICA.

A major focus of the meeting will be to set the technical program and approve the budget for the October business meeting. Rudy and the Board are open to your input of possible topics for the fall meeting. Be sure to contact Rudy with your suggestions. Now is the time to mark your calendar to attend the fall meeting. **Please be sure to register for, and attend our 2021 Fall Business Meeting scheduled for October 14 & 15, 2021, at the Omaha Downtown Marriott in Omaha, NE.**

Thank you for your continued support of MICA, and we look forward to renewing our face-to-face relationships with you in October.

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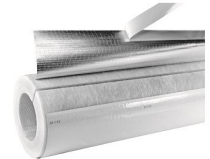
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## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

### **TO: THE MICA MEMBERSHIP**

Greeting MICA Membership!

Thank you for sticking with us over the last 18 months, and being patient as we navigated the unusual world in which we found ourselves. I know we all missed joining colleagues, traveling to see family, and being able to go to a ball game – A special thanks goes to Past-President, Steve Sack, and his wife, Megan, as they helped the association make difficult decisions that were necessary for the association as a whole.

I am equally as excited, as I am humbled, to be your President for this 2021-2022 MICA year. For those of you that I have not yet had the opportunity to meet, my name is Rudy Nigl, representing L&C Insulation from La Crosse, WI. We are a merit contractor working in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa.

My wife, Courtney (Gauchel), and I have been married 7 years and have been blessed with three amazing children; Emmalyn (6), Sadie (4), Rudy (2). Our son, Rudolph (Rudy), is actually the 6<sup>th</sup> generation Rudolph bearing the family name dating back to my great-great grandfather.

I know what you're thinking...I've seen that "Gauchel" name a few times before. Yes, Courtney is one of two daughters of MICA's Past President

and William R. Heaston Award Recipient, Peter Gauchel. The "L" and "C" of L&C Insulation is coined after Peter and Brenda's two daughters – Lauren and Courtney.

Prior to meeting the cute girl that led me into the Mechanical Insulation Industry I was in educational development and fundraising. The last 8 years with L&C Insulation have been a whirlwind of education, experience, failures and growth. I cannot give enough thanks to Peter and Brenda Gauchel for not only trusting me with their daughter, but also with the responsibility and accountability of leading L&C Insulation.

My Theme for the upcoming year is "Here and Now". After the unprecedented year we just had, it seems fitting to focus on being present – whether that be with your employees, colleagues, family or friends. Being present and giving attention to the things around us can help us be more successful and helps others find everyday successes as well.

Being active within the MICA Association has helped me better myself and our company immensely. Being rather "green" within this industry, I have greatly valued all that MICA has to offer; educational sessions, round table discussions, and just being able to sit down with experienced leaders from all aspects of the industry to pick their brain and learn how to be more successful.

Your leadership for this year includes President-Elect: Doug Barton, Vice President: XXXXXX, Past-President: Steve Sack, Associate President: Darrell Peil, and Presidential Advisors: Peter Gauchel and Jeff DeGraaf.

Can't wait to see everyone in October in Omaha!

Sincerely,

Rudy Nigl  
MICA President

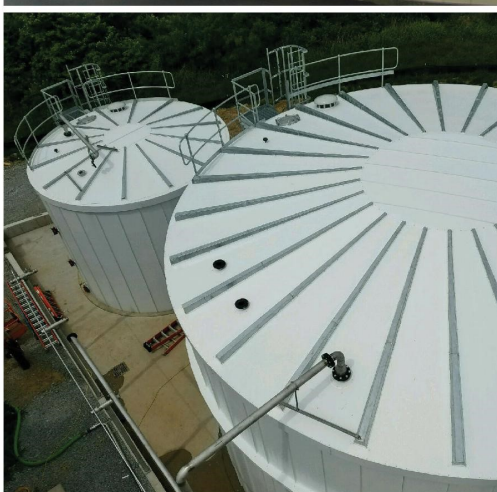


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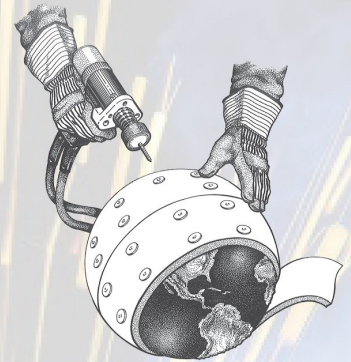
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## **CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYMENT DECLINES IN 40 STATES BETWEEN APRIL AND MAY AS SOARING MATERIAL COSTS, SUPPLY-CHAIN DISRUPTIONS IMPEDE RECOVERY**

June 23, 2021

*New York and Vermont Iowa Post Biggest Monthly Losses, While Florida and Oklahoma Top Gainers; Texas and Wyoming Have Worst Job Losses from the Pandemic, as Utah and Idaho Add the Most*

Construction employment in May remained below the April level in 40 states and the District of Columbia, according to an [analysis](#) by the Associated General Contractors of America of government employment data released today. Association officials said skyrocketing materials prices and excessive delays in receiving key construction supplies were holding back the industry's recovery.

"Today's numbers show that impacts from the pandemic on demand for projects and on materials costs and the supply chain are weighing down construction in most parts of the country," said Ken Simonson, the association's chief economist. "In the few states where industry employment has topped the pre-pandemic levels of February 2020, most gains are likely attributable more to demand for homebuilding and remodeling than to most categories of nonresidential building and infrastructure projects."

From April to May, construction employment decreased in 40 states and D.C., increased in only eight states, and held steady in Maryland and Utah. The largest decline over the month occurred in New York, which lost 5,900 construction jobs or 1.6 percent, followed by Illinois (-5,600 jobs, -2.5 percent) and Pennsylvania (-3,300 jobs, -1.3 percent). The steepest percentage declines since April occurred in Vermont (-3.9 percent, -600 jobs), followed by Maine (-3.5 percent, -1,100 jobs) and Delaware (-3.0 percent, -300 jobs).

Florida added the most construction jobs between April and May (3,700 jobs, 0.6 percent), followed by Michigan (1,600 jobs, 0.9 percent) and Minnesota (1,200 jobs, 0.9 percent). Oklahoma had the largest percentage gain for the month (1.3 percent, 1,000 jobs), followed by Minnesota and Michigan.

Employment declined from the pre-pandemic peak month of February 2020 in 42 states and D.C. Texas lost the most construction jobs over the period (-49,100 jobs or -6.3 percent), followed by New York (-45,200 jobs, -11.1 percent) and California (-30,800 jobs, -3.4%). Wyoming recorded the largest percentage loss (-15.3 percent, -3,500 jobs), followed by Louisiana (-15.1 percent, -20,700 jobs) and New York.

Among the eight states that added construction jobs since February 2020, the largest pickup occurred in Utah (5,000 jobs, 4.4 percent), followed by Idaho (3,400 jobs, 6.2 percent) and South Dakota (1,200 jobs, 5.0 percent). The largest percentage gain was in Idaho, followed by South Dakota and Utah.

Association officials noted that cost increases and extended

lead times for producing many construction materials are exacerbating a slow recovery for construction. They urged the Biden administration to accelerate its timetable for reaching agreement with allies on removing tariffs on steel and aluminum, and to initiate talks to end tariffs on Canadian lumber.

"Federal officials can help get more construction workers employed by removing tariffs on essential construction materials such as lumber, steel and aluminum," said Stephen E. Sandherr, the association's chief executive officer. "These tariffs are causing unnecessary harm to construction workers and firms, as well as to the administration's goals of building more affordable housing and infrastructure."

## **DODGE MOMENTUM INDEX JUMPS IN MAY**

*Commercial planning pushes Index to seventh consecutive monthly gain*

**HAMILTON, New Jersey – June 7, 2021** – The Dodge Momentum Index moved 9.1% higher in May to 178.0 (2000=100), up from the revised April reading of 163.2. The Momentum Index, issued by [Dodge Data & Analytics](#), is a monthly measure of the first (or initial) report for nonresidential building projects in planning, which have been shown to lead construction spending for nonresidential buildings by a full year.

May's jump was the result of a large increase in commercial planning activity, which posted its strongest month-over-month increase since October 2017. Institutional planning, meanwhile, fell by less than one percentage point.

Commercial planning had been in a holding pattern over the last four months, but broke out in May due to several sizable data center, office, and warehouse projects that peaked in a 13-year high for the commercial component of the Momentum Index. While essentially flat in May, institutional planning remains at levels not seen since 2009. On a year-over-year basis, both commercial and institutional planning were up from May 2020 (38% and 47% respectively). The Momentum Index overall was also 41% higher than in May 2020.

A total of 21 projects with a value of \$100 million or more entered planning during May. The leading commercial projects were a \$500 million conversion of a coal-burning power plant to a data center in Barker NY and a \$450 million office campus in Los Angeles CA. The leading institutional projects were the \$250 million Houston Methodist Hospital Campus in Cypress TX and the \$250 million Landmark Center in Boston MA.

The rising trend in planning activity is a good sign that the economic recovery is starting to spread into the construction sector. However, these projects are unlikely to have an impact on construction starts this year. Rising material prices and a continued shortage of skilled labor have led to project delays. On the upside, construction starts are shaping up for a healthy increase in 2022.





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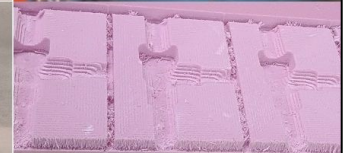
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## NEW CONTRACTOR MEMBER OF MICA

The Board of Directors of MICA has approved the application of Butler Professional Insulation for membership in MICA. Butler Professional Insulation is the latest contractor member to join MICA this year. Lance Butler, owner of the company is looking forward to his participation in MICA. Lance is a second generation insulation contractor. The company has been in business for 5 years, but Lance has 25 plus years of experience in the industry. Butler is a merit shop contracting company that provides commercial and light industrial insulation services in food processing and other plant work. The company is a Tyson preferred contractor and Simmons Food preferred contractor. They employ around 25 employees and work in an 8 state area.

Please extend a warm "MICA Welcome" to Lance and Butler Professional Insulation, and add the following contact information in your company database:

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## OSHA INITIATIVE SEEKS TO PROTECT MANUFACTURING WORKERS IN MIDWEST FACILITIES FROM HAZARDOUS NOISE LEVELS

*The following article was prepared by Lindsey Deck and Gary Auman of Auman Mahan & Furry.*

On June 1, 2021, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Region V office established a regional emphasis program (REP) focusing on occupational noise exposure in the workplace (<https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OPA/newsreleases/2021/06/OSHA2021994NOISEREP.pdf>). The initiative is meant to encourage employers to take steps to identify, reduce and eliminate hazards associated with exposure to high levels of noise. The REP comes in the wake of a recent study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), which found that the national average hearing loss rate for all private manufacturing is 8.6 cases per 10,000 full time workers. In addition, the study found that over half of workers in production occupations did not use personal protective equipment to mitigate workplace noise exposure ([https://www.bls.gov/iif/oshwc/osh/os/snr08\\_00\\_2019.xlsx](https://www.bls.gov/iif/oshwc/osh/os/snr08_00_2019.xlsx)).

In response to these alarming rates, OSHA Region V, which includes Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin, has proposed to accomplish this REP through outreach and enforcement activities. The outreach proposed will include the following:

- Targeted presentations, speeches, meetings and/or training sessions with employers/stakeholders;
- Letters/mailings to employers, professional associations, local safety councils, apprenticeship programs, local hospitals and occupational health clinics;

*(Continued on page 17)*



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### **FUTURE MICA MEETING DATES**

**CANCELED** — 64th Annual Spring Convention — June 21 — 24, 2021, Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort, Bonita Springs, FL.

Summer 2021 Board of Directors Meeting — August 2 & 3, 2021, Fitger's Inn, Duluth, MN.

Fall 2021 Annual Fall Business Meeting — October 14 & 15, 2021, Omaha Marriott Downtown, Omaha, NE.

2022 Winter Meetings — January 2022, TBD


65th Annual Spring Convention — June 19 — 22, 2022, Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort, Bonita Springs, FL.

Fall 2022 Annual Fall Business Meeting — October 13 & 14, 2022, Omaha Marriott Downtown, Omaha, NE.

68th Annual Spring Convention — June 16 — 19, 2025, Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort, Bonita Springs, FL.

### **MICA MEMBER ADDRESS/INFO. UPDATES**

Be sure to inform the MICA office of any changes or corrections to your listing for either the MICA Directory, e-mail correspondence or mailing address. **Even if you update your company listing on the MICA website, please inform the MICA office of the changes.** We try to be as current as possible with your help.




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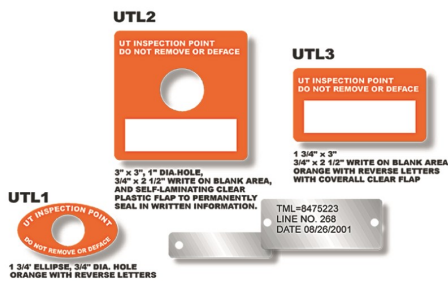


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(Continued from page 12)

- News releases through local newspapers, safety councils, and/or industrial hygiene organizations;
- Use of current social media methods;
- Leveraging existing partnerships and alliances; and
- Encourage the use of OSHA's On-Site Consultation Program and compliance assistance resources.

The outreach, which began on June 1, 2021, will be followed by enforcement actions no sooner than three (3) months after OSHA's initial outreach efforts began. Starting in August, manufacturing employers located in Region V with hearing loss rates higher than the national average can expect inspections of their workplace. The REP empowers OSHA to conduct inspections for all complaints and referrals in industries covered by the REP. In addition, OSHA will conduct inspections based on a randomized programmed inspection list, as prepared by the National Office. All selected establishments, regardless of size, will be inspected. During those inspections, CSHOs will review OSHA 300 injury and illness logs; walk around the facility to obtain sound level meter readings; conduct full shift noise monitoring and issue citations for violations of 29 CFR 1910.95. As stated, the REP gives OSHA probable cause to the extent an employer has a hearing loss rate higher than the national average to enter the workplace and walk around the facility to take sound level meter readings. Of course, they will also cite employers for any other safety violations they observe during this walk around.

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As always, our primary goal is to protect your employees. To that end, and in general, employers should ensure they are well informed about the requirements and expectations of OSHA. You need to be sure that you have evaluated any noise exposure for your employees. If you determine that you have noise exposures in excess of 85 dBA, you need to have in place a written hearing conservation program. If your employees are exposed to noise in excess of 90 dBA, you must have a written program in compliance with the requirements of OSHA Standard 1910.95. Feel free to contact MRCA [MICA] [NFBA] for further information and/or assistance should any specific questions regarding this REP arise.

### **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR OUTLINES UPCOMING WORKER-CENTERED PROTECTIONS IN BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION SPRING REGULATORY AGENDA**

WASHINGTON, DC – A mother of two struggles to budget for child care expenses on an hourly income of \$11.50 as a call center worker with a federal contractor. A construction company owner learns they've lost another federal contract because a competitor was able to underbid the job by not paying livable wages. Socially conscious investors want to maximize their savings and do the planet some good, but are frustrated by the investment options available to do that.

As part of the Biden-Harris administration's Spring 2021 regulatory agenda – published June 11, 2021, as required by [Execu-](#)

(Continued on page 19)





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(Continued from page 17)

[ive Order 12866](#) – the U.S. Department of Labor is announcing a series of anticipated regulatory actions to ensure the well-being of these workers, employers and others.

The order requires the publication of an agenda of regulations that contains a listing of all the regulations the Department of Labor expects to have under active consideration for promulgation, proposal or review during the coming one-year period.

The department's portions of the agenda published today include actions to implement the Biden-Harris Administration's priorities in the areas of economic relief, wages, climate change and racial equity. It also includes proposals to withdraw the obstacles to protecting and strengthening workers' economic security and civil rights that the prior administration put in place.

Regulatory protections include:

- Increasing the Minimum Wage for Federal Contractors: In response to Executive Order 14026, "Increasing the Minimum Wage for Federal Contractors," the department's Wage and Hour Division is drafting regulations that will increase the hourly minimum wage rate paid by parties that contract with the federal government to \$15 for those employees working on or in connection with a covered federal government contract.
- Fairness for Workers Who Rely on Tips: The Wage and Hour Division is also engaged in rulemaking to address the economic security of tipped workers.

- Modernizing the Davis-Bacon and Related Acts Regulations: The DBRA requires the payment of locally prevailing wages and fringe benefits to laborers and mechanics as determined by the department. The Wage and Hour Division is proposing to update and modernize the regulations implementing the DBRA to provide ensure workers are truly paid prevailing wages on federal construction contracts.
- Re-examining our approach to investments that tackle climate change: To implement Executive Order 13990, "Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis," and Executive Order 14030, "Climate-Related Financial Risks," the Employee Benefits Security Administration is undertaking a review of regulations under Title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, including "Financial Factors in Selecting Plan Investments" and "Fiduciary Duties Regarding Proxy Voting and Shareholder Rights."

Prior rulemakings are also being proposed for withdrawal because of their deleterious effects on the lives of working people, including a rule on labor standards in apprenticeship.

The entirety of the department's semiannual agenda is available online at [www.reginfo.gov](http://www.reginfo.gov).



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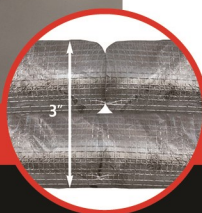
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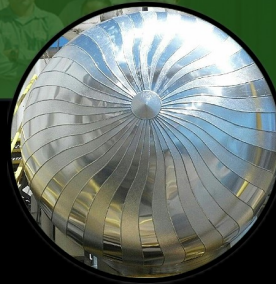
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# **PRODUCER PRICES FOR CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS AND SERVICES JUMP 24 PERCENT OVER 12 MONTHS, THREATENING CONTRACTORS' SOLVENCY AND WORKERS' JOBS**

June 15, 2021

The cost of goods and services used in construction climbed by a record-setting 4.3 percent in May and 24.3 percent over the past 12 months, jeopardizing contractors' solvency and construction workers' employment, according to an [analysis](#) by the Associated General Contractors of America of government data released today. Association officials urged the Biden administration to move more quickly to end tariffs and quotas that are adding to construction materials costs and availability problems.

"The increase in producer prices for construction materials over the past year far outstrips contractors' ability to charge more for projects," said Ken Simonson, the association's chief economist. "That gap means contractors are being hit with huge costs that they did not anticipate and cannot pass on."

The 24.3 percent increase in prices for materials used in construction from May 2020 to last month was nearly twice as great as in any previous year, Simonson said. Meanwhile, the producer price index for new nonresidential construction—a measure of what contractors say they would charge to erect five types of nonresidential buildings—rose only 2.8 percent over the past 12 months, as contractors held their profit expectations down in order to compete for a limited number of new projects.

Items with especially steep price increases over the past year covered a wide range of materials, including products made from wood, metals, plastics, and gypsum. The producer price index for lumber and plywood more than doubled—rocketing 111 percent from May 2020 to last month. The index for steel mill products climbed 75.6 percent, while the index for copper and brass mill shapes rose 60.4 percent and the index for aluminum mill shapes increased 28.6 percent. The index for plastic construction products rose 17.5 percent. The index for gypsum products such as wallboard climbed 14.1 percent. Fuel costs, which contractors pay directly to operate their own trucks and off-road equipment, as well as through surcharges on freight deliveries, have also jumped.

Association officials said the Biden administration can provide immediate relief from some of the price pressures by ending tariffs on Canadian lumber, along with tariffs and quotas on steel and aluminum from numerous countries. Officials said the administration took a first step today by announcing agreement on a working group with the European Union that will aim to end tariffs on steel and aluminum from the EU by the end of 2021 but that much more tariff relief is needed, and sooner. The administration should also end the duty on Canadian softwood lumber, instead of doubling the rate, as the Commerce Department has proposed, the officials added.

"The administration is right to recognize that ending tariffs on our allies is good policy," said Stephen E. Sandherr, the association's chief executive officer. "But there is no reason to wait six months to adopt good measures. The president should go further, by ending tariffs and quotas on steel and aluminum from other trading partners as well as the European Union."

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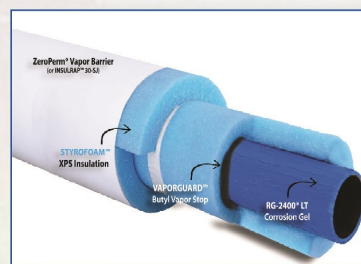
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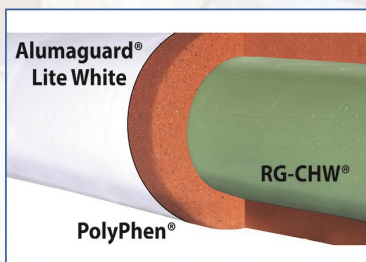
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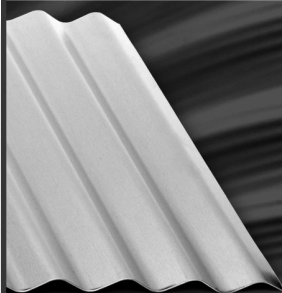
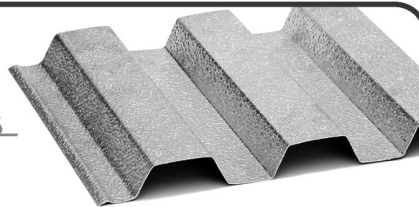




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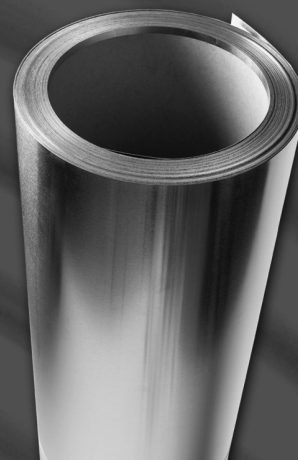
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**ABOUT NIA'S 65<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONVENTION**

The National Insulation Association (NIA) invites you to join your industry colleagues in person October 26–28, 2021, at the MGM National Harbor in National Harbor, Maryland (located just outside of Washington, DC). Full registration details can be found at the NIA website: [www.insulation.org](http://www.insulation.org).

NIA's 65<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention is the time for NIA members to reconnect with each other. This event will bring together the networking, educational, and entertainment events that you look forward to at our events! The Convention theme—**Together for Tomorrow**—will be an important point of connection as we support each and reconnect during the education and networking elements.

We at NIA are excited to welcome attendees from all segments of the mechanical insulation industry back to a NIA favorite location, the MGM at National Harbor! Safety is a top priority for NIA, MGM, and our members, and we will ensure all necessary safety precautions are in place, executed, and enforced with the hotel.

NIA's mask policy at the event will adhere to the latest safety guidelines and recommendations. More information about this policy will be posted closer to the event dates. (Currently, masks are required for all guests inside public spaces at all MGM Resorts properties across the United States.)

**Who Should Attend**

Convention attendees represent all segments of the mechanical insulation industry on a national level: merit and union contractors, distributors, fabricators, laminators, and manufacturers. This broad representation of the industry allows attendees many opportunities to gain new business contacts, network, and build

relationships. Spouses, guests, and children are encouraged to attend.

**STATEMENT BY U.S. SECRETARY OF LABOR WALSH ON THE MAY JOBS REPORT**

**WASHINGTON, DC** – U.S. Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh issued the following statement on the May 2021 Employment Situation Report:

"Today, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the American economy added 559,000 jobs in the month of May, and the unemployment rate was 5.8 percent, down from 6.1 percent in April to the lowest point it has been since March of 2020. This data reflects solid continuing job growth and strong evidence that our efforts through the American Rescue Plan to vaccinate Americans and support families, small businesses, schools and childcare providers are working to reopen and rebuild our economy.

"These numbers match what I've seen and heard as I travel around the country talking to workers. From early educators in Tennessee, to power plant workers in Wisconsin, to steel fabricators and home health aides in Pennsylvania: working people across America are eager to work, support their families and strengthen their communities.

"But workers also told me about the challenges they and their families face – finding affordable childcare, caring for elderly parents and grandparents, and overcoming the hurdles raised by decades of income inequality and race- and gender-based inequity. These challenges are also reflected in our jobs data, and they are why the American Jobs Plan and the American Families Plan are so important. We need to invest in our workforce and our communities to achieve an inclusive recovery and a competitive economy."

Sometimes the  
best amenities  
are the ones  
you don't see

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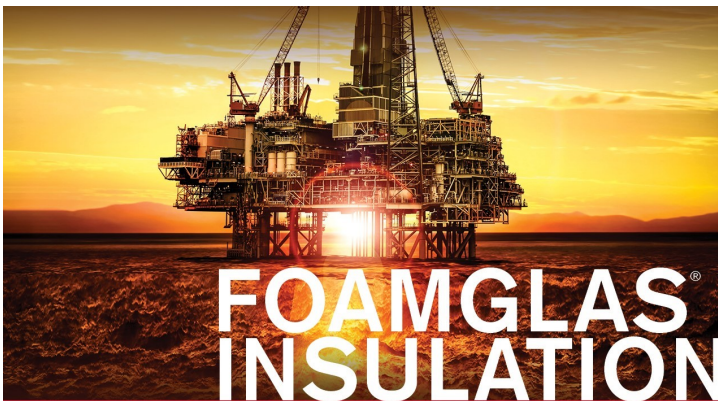
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