President Lance Pickerign and his wife, Renee, wish to extend a warm MICA invitation to you to join them as our association engages in “Getting Involved”. One of the key benefits of belonging to MICA is your ability to work with fellow members to improve your business acumen and to better your industry. Come and participate as we share ideas at our annual convention this June 22 – 25, 2015, at one of the Midwest’s most unique resort and conference center; the Blue Harbor Resort & Spa. Nestled on the western shore of the always-majestic Lake Michigan, this picturesque and stately home-away-from-home presents a stunning view all unto itself. With 180 hotel rooms and 64 villas, Blue Harbor offers a wide variety of accommodations perfect for our annual convention.

Our 58th Annual Spring Convention will be a special event, and one that you do not want to miss! **The convention will follow a Monday to Thursday pattern that we have used the past three years.** Based on feedback from our members, we have moved the arrival date from Sunday of Father’s Day to Monday. This will allow our members to possibly spend Father’s Day at home with family and friends.

The location of this year’s meeting is designed to allow those of you who would like to extend the meeting into a vacation time for the entire family to do so. At Blue Harbor, you have both Lake Michigan and the Sheboygan River in your back yard. Recreation activities are diverse, whether it’s a rollicking visit to the year-round indoor waterpark and mini-golf course or a relaxing stroll on one of the eco-friendly lakeshore trails. When you’re at The Blue, relaxation, fun and comfort are intertwined. The resort restaurants include the premier Latitude 43 or casual Beacon, all with extraordinary views. Treat yourself to the expertise and personalized care available at Reflections Spa.

Shopping, golf, watersports and charter fishing are just a few minutes away on foot or by car. Make a sand castle at the beach, take a long nature walk along the shoreline or try a real water adventure by sailing, kayaking or stand-up paddleboarding. If fishing or golf is your game, you’re in luck: The resort has partnered with local charter fishing services as well as The Bull, a Jack Nicklaus course that’s just 10 minutes away. For those that love to shop, Blue Harbor offers some unexpected, delightful choices at The Boutique and its other retail stores. More shops — as well as as assortment of bars and restaurants — are a short walk away at Sheboygan’s quaint Harbor Centre. Deeper into this family-friendly city, a wide range of museums and entertainment awaits.

We have reserved a block of rooms at the resort. Our convention rate for resort rooms is $145 per night plus tax, single or double occupancy plus a resort amenity fee of $10.00 per day. **It is highly suggested that you book your resort reservations now!** Call the reservations office at 866-701-2583 and reference the Midwest Insulation Contractors code — 7AL45L. Please note that we have blocked a limited number of rooms. If you wait until the last minute to reserve your room, you run the risk that our block will be filled, and the resort will not have any additional rooms available. As we have stated in the past, if you reserve your hotel room now, you can always cancel it later, but you may not be able to reserve a room if you wait too long. We will be monitoring our block and making room adjustments accordingly. **Our block of rooms will be released on May 21, 2015,** but if you wait until May 21st, the block of rooms will be filled, and we may not be able to accommodate your needs.

The Board of Directors is most excited about the technical topics and speakers for the spring convention. The topics and speakers were selected to help educate and inform you on a variety of industry topics pertinent to our current business climate. We are going to have presentations that cover a wide array of topics that will help you grow your knowledge as a business professional. We will have an opening presentation on “Sifting Through the Generational Drama...Reviving the
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

TO: THE MICA MEMBERSHIP

Good Day MICA Friends

Spring is here!!

March – A time for families to get away on spring break vacations and look forward to warmer days ahead. Here in Minnesota we were treated to some crazy March weather going from below zero one week to near 70 degrees the next. The warm weather was a nice surprise allowing us the opportunity to open up the house a little early and clear out the stale winter air, and of course, Gypsy (our 30 lb. chaw/corgi mix) was very happy, because she really doesn’t like winter that much!

Planning for our June meeting has been going full force since our winter planning session, and I am happy to say your Board of Directors and committee members have worked very hard to line up great speakers and educational topics that I am sure you will find valuable to your business. You won’t want to miss it!

Registration and hotel information has been sent out. If you have not received your packet by the time this newsletter comes out, please contact the MICA office so another one can be sent to you. Make your hotel reservations early because our room block will fill up fast.

Many thanks to everyone who has helped in the planning process to this point. It’s great to see so many MICA Members “Get involved” to ensure we are able to offer you a quality meeting that provides every company with valuable, timely information that affects our companies and our industry.

Along with the registration packets sent this month, the MICA Safety Best Practices award questionnaire has been sent out. Every year we have seen increased participation by our members and we look forward to having EVERY company send in their application. Having an OSHA recordable incident should not discourage your participation as this is not taken into consideration in the grading process. Plus you receive valuable feedback from “Doctor Doom” with ways to enhance your program. This feedback is one of the benefits you get for being a MICA member, but you can only take advantage of this benefit if you apply. I have appreciated this feedback over the years. It has helped us improve our safety program.

Remember to be looking out for those 2 wheel monsters that are back out on the roads.

Enjoy the warm weather and be safe!

Renee and I are looking forward to seeing you at The Blue Harbor Resort in June.

Thanks for reading.

Respectfully,

Lance Pickerign
MICA President
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FUTURE MICA MEETING DATES

58th Annual Spring Convention — June 22 — 25, 2015, Blue Harbor Resort, Sheboygan, Wisconsin.  [Please note that the convention will begin on the Monday after Father’s Day. This slight change in the schedule is the direct result of member feedback to the Board].

Fall 2015 Annual Fall Business Meeting — October 21 & 22, 2015, Embassy Suites Downtown, Omaha, NE.

59th Annual Spring Convention — June 20 — 23, 2016, Chateau on the Lake, Branson, Missouri.  [Please note that the convention will begin on the Monday after Father’s Day. This slight change in the schedule is the direct result of member feedback to the Board].

Fall 2016 Annual Fall Business Meeting — October 19 & 20, 2016, Embassy Suites Downtown, Omaha, NE.

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.

(Continued from page 1)

Fascination We Once Had for Our Differences”. As the baby boomers age and the younger generation of people move into the workplace, the need for understanding generational differences is crucial for business survival. Our keynote speaker, Ms. Karrie Landsverk, Partner and Director of Education with AmericanWay University in Portage, WI, will address this topic in an entertaining and educational morning session. Dr. Linda Goldenhar, Director of Research and Evaluation at CPWR: The Center for Construction Research and Training, will give us her insight on improving our company’s safety culture with her presentation on, “Making a Positive Difference in Construction Safety and Health by Improving Safety Culture, Safety Climate, & Safety Leadership”. Gary Auman will provide an extended update on OSHA requirements that will include a discussion on how to document recordables properly as well as other recordkeeping and reporting issues. We will hear from Alec Rexroat as he provides an enlighten presentation on the efforts of the Labor Management Trust to promote the mechanical insulation industry to a national audience. You will be updated on the new MICA plates that have been added to the 7th edition of the National Commercial & Industrial Insulation Standards manual in 2015. Mr. J. Kenneth Freeman, NIA President for 2015 – 2016, will give us an update on our industry activities at the national level.

We will have a union contractor forum, an open shop contractor forum, and an associate member forum all running simultaneously. This approach allows more of the members to participate in craft issues without being part of a formal committee. This spring, neither the labor committee nor the merit shop committee will formally meet during the convention. This format will give each of you the opportunity to interact with other MICA members with similar business concerns. The associate member forum will discuss several issues of interest to our associate members regarding their membership status in MICA.

In June, we will recognize those companies that participated in our tenth annual “Best Practices in Safety” Award. This award was established to formally recognize our member firms’ efforts in safety and safety practices. This year, we again use the changes that we made to the “Best Practices in Safety” Award program. We will use the grading system that recognizes each applicant’s achievement in developing a quality safety program. With this system, companies are not competing against each other for awards. Instead, each applicant will try to achieve the highest award level where multiple applicants can receive the same award level. On our second day of meetings, representatives of the participating firms will meet in a roundtable discussion on safety. They will share with us their efforts in promoting safety and establishing best practices in safety.

The Board of Directors feels that each presentation will add value to your understanding of the technical topics discussed. You will come away from the convention more informed and better prepared to successfully manage your business. It is the Board’s intent to make this convention attractive to our mem-

(Continued on page 7)
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bership in its location, cost and program content. In this light, our registration fee has been adjusted to encourage additional member participation. The registration fee is $515.00 for the first attendee from a member company. Registration for all additional attendees from a given company is reduced to $490.

The registration fee is $915.00 for the first member and spouse registered from a member company. Registration for all additional registered couples from a given company is reduced to $890. This year we have included a children’s registration for the Welcome Reception and Farewell Brunch events only. The fee is $50.00 to $100.00 per child. The Board is delighted to offer this new incentive for multiple attendees from member companies. The benefit of joining an association comes from participating in association activities.

The seventeenth annual “Mick Van Horn Memorial Golf Tournament” is set for Tuesday afternoon, June 23, 2015, at The Bull Golf Course at Pinehurst Farms. We have a shotgun start set for 1:00 p.m. The Bull is a Jack Nicklaus designed Signature Course, and was Ranked #70 Public Golf Course in America (Golf Digest 2015-2016). The course is about a 30 minute drive from our host hotel, and a shuttle will be provided. This year’s fee is $140.00 per golfer, which includes a shuttle to and from the course, The Bull’s Wisconsin Burger & Brat Buffet, cart, green fees, complimentary use of practice and range area, and of course, prizes. Please read the golf registration carefully. Payment for golf must accompany the registration fee. Please complete the golf portion of the registration form as fully as possible, especially the handicap information. This is essential for us to properly match the foursomes. You need to register for the golf tournament by May 22, 2015.

The program also affords you ample time for fun and relaxation and to interact with your fellow contractors and distributors. We have the traditional opening evening Welcome Reception. This year’s reception is sponsored in part by the contributing associate members. We will feast on hors d’oeuvres, libations, and renew friendships. Our gala dinner and dance will be on Wednesday evening. This year’s gala is semi-formal dress. We will honor Alec Rexroat, Past President and long-time member of MICA, with the “William R. Heaston Outstanding Member” award. Alec is an ambassador extraordinaire for MICA and the insulation industry. He truly exemplifies the virtues reflected in Bill Heaston of selfless service to MICA and the insulation industry. The recognition ceremony will take place during our Wednesday evening gala.

A packet of registration material was mailed to you earlier this month. Let us know if you need another packet. Make plans now to bring your family to the MICA convention and extend your business to include some quality family time. Now is the time to plan for your participation at MICA’s 58th annual spring convention. Make your hotel reservations today by calling The Blue Harbor Resort reservation line at 866-701-2583. Please join Lance, Renee, the entire Board of Directors and fellow MICA members in Sheboygan, June 22 – 25, 2015, for our annual spring convention and be a part of “Getting Involved.”
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MICA SAFETY PROGRAM REVIEW AND AWARD

This article was written by Gary Auman, MICA Legal Counsel, Dunlevey, Mahan & Furry

MICA has always understood the importance of safety on the job site. As a result of this, MICA implemented a safety award program seven years ago. The MICA Board asked me again to prepare some comments for your consideration as to the value of participating in our safety award program. If you don’t have a good plan for getting a job done, the outcome is going to be less than satisfactory. I believe, as you should that this applies to safety - good safety performance starts with a good safety program.

I titled this article as I did because this is more than a safety award program; it is a safety program review. Try to analogize having your safety program reviewed annually to other things that you do in your life to ensure that your company’s equipment operates as intended. For those of you who passed your fiftieth birthday, I am sure that you have been advised by your family physician to have an annual or bi-annual physical. Your doctor recommends this, because he is aware that as you get older you become more prone to some of the physical problems that are connected with aging. You take a physical to make sure you have an early warning of anything that needs to be addressed before it becomes a significant problem.

In your business, I would be surprised if any of you do not perform preventive maintenance on the equipment that you depend on to be successful as a contractor. In addition, you most likely perform other preventive maintenance such as tire rotation, etc., in order that you can avoid any significant problems.

Well, your safety program is also an integral part of your business. It too can deteriorate with age and lack of use. It too needs preventive maintenance to avoid catastrophic failure. When a safety program fails you, someone can get seriously injured or killed. Or, you can be confronted with an OSHA inspection and find out through the citations issued that your safety program is not what you thought it was and is not as effective as it needs to be.

You could pay hundreds or even thousands of dollars to have a safety consultant review your safety program. Through the MICA safety program review and awards opportunity, you can have portions of your safety program reviewed, and receive written comments from individuals who have a wealth of experience in dealing with safety issues. You will receive valuable feedback from the reviewing panel with regard to those aspects of your program which are in the competition, and you will receive recognition from MICA for your achievement in developing a quality safety program.

When you look at the MICA safety program review and awards opportunity, you have to agree that there is absolutely no reason why you should sit on the sidelines while other members of MICA, some of whom are your competitors, take advantage of this MICA member benefit. Take a few minutes, pull out the application, complete it, and send it in to MICA’s general counsel along with your check for $50.00 made payable to MICA. Be sure that it is received in time for the review committee to take a look at it and provide you with their valuable comments concerning the effectiveness of your safety program.

REMEMBER — The application submittal deadline is April 10, 2015. Your completed application form must be received by the end of the business day on April 10th. The application form is available from the MICA office. Just call or e-mail us, and we will send you a copy of the application form.

OSHA EXTENDS COMMENT PERIOD FOR MANAGING HAZARDOUS CHEMICAL EXPOSURES IN WORKPLACE

WASHINGTON – The Occupational Safety and Health Administration is extending the comment period on a Request for Information on Chemical Management and Permissible Exposure Limits to Oct. 9, 2015.

OSHA issued the RFI on Oct. 10, 2014, requesting stakeholder input about more effective and efficient approaches to address workplace conditions where workers are exposed to chemicals. The agency received multiple requests from stakeholders to extend the comment period to allow them more time to research and formulate responses to questions included in the RFI.

The official notice was published March 25, 2015, in the Federal Register. Comments may be submitted electronically at http://www.regulations.gov, the Federal eRulemaking Portal, by mail or facsimile.
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DODGE MOMENTUM INDEX RISES IN FEBRUARY

The Dodge Momentum Index increased to 126.3 (2000=100) in February, a gain of 4.3% from January’s 121.1, according to Dodge Data & Analytics. The Momentum Index 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. The Momentum Index has been exhibiting somewhat of a saw-tooth pattern of late, up in December, down in January, and now up in February. Despite the volatility that is sometimes visible in planning data, the overall trend for the Index continues to be positive, painting the picture of a broad-based but still moderate recovery for nonresidential building projects at the planning stage. The Index now stands 17% higher than one year ago.

The increase for the Momentum Index in February was due to a rise in planning activity for both the commercial and institutional sectors. The institutional sector increased 6.0%, while the commercial sector rose by 3.3%. There were seven projects exceeding $100 million that entered planning during the latest month, comprised of six commercial projects and one institutional project. On the commercial side, these projects entered planning – the $180 million Liberty Mutual Insurance Service Center Building in Plano TX, a $145 million office tower and a $106 million hotel, both in Chicago IL, a $105 million warehouse in Bethlehem PA, a $100 million hotel in Sarasota FL, and a $100 million hotel in Windsor CO. On the institutional side, a $225 million public safety complex in Philadelphia PA entered planning.

FEDERAL JOB-PROTECTED FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE RIGHTS EXTENDED TO ELIGIBLE WORKERS IN SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

Workers in legal, same-sex marriages, regardless of where they live, will now have the same rights as those in opposite-sex marriages to federal job-protected leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act to care for a spouse with a serious health condition. The U.S. Labor Department announced a rule change to the FMLA this past month in keeping with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in United States v. Windsor. That ruling struck down the federal Defense of Marriage Act provision that interpreted "marriage" and "spouse" to be limited to opposite-sex marriage for the purposes of federal law.

"The basic promise of the FMLA is that no one should have to choose between the job and income they need, and caring for a loved one," said U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez in announcing the rule change. "With our action today, we extend that promise so that no matter who you love, you will receive the same rights and protections as everyone else. All eligible employees in legal same-sex marriages, regardless of where they live, can now deal with a serious medical and family situa-
tion like all families — without the threat of job loss."

Enacted in 1993, the FMLA entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons. Employees are, for example, entitled to take FMLA leave to care for a spouse who has a serious health condition. Millions of workers and their families have benefited since the FMLA's provisions became effective and even more American families will benefit as a result of the rule.

This rule change updates the FMLA regulatory definition of "spouse" so that an eligible employee in a legal same-sex marriage will be able to take FMLA leave for his or her spouse regardless of the state in which the employee resides. Previously, the regulatory definition of "spouse" did not include same-sex spouses if an employee resided in a state that did not recognize the employee's same-sex marriage. Under the new rule, eligibility for federal FMLA protections is based on the law of the place where the marriage was entered into. This "place of celebration" provision allows all legally married couples, whether opposite-sex or same-sex, to have consistent federal family leave rights regardless of whether the state in which they currently reside recognizes such marriages.

For additional information on the FMLA, including information and fact sheets on the revisions, visit http://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/spouse/index.htm.
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The aim of the Insulators’ Tissue Bank (ITB) at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York City is to establish a tissue bank of high quality, asbestos-related-tumor tissue specimens and fluid samples, in order to support research that either aims to better understand the mechanisms of asbestos-induced cancer, or aims to develop interventions and cures for asbestos-related cancers.

Anyone who suspects or knows they have been exposed to asbestos is welcome to participate.

In brief, if a participant ever goes for a procedure for an asbestos-related condition, and if tissue is taken as part of that procedure, then any spare tissue will be sent to the tissue bank instead of being discarded. In other words, no tissue is ever taken solely for the purposes of the ITB; we are simply trying to stop the waste of tissue being trashed.

For a more complete description of the ITB, we have both a research participant information sheet and a PowerPoint presentation.

These forms and complete information about the Insulators’ Tissue Bank can be found at http://breathoflifefoundation.net/medical-information/mt-sinai-tissue-bank/.

If you would like to participate, first, thank you! Second, you will need to complete a contact information sheet and a consent form (available in English or Spanish; there are also instructions for completing the consent form: instructions for insulators and instructions for family members and other non-IAHFI participants). Consent forms and contact info sheets should be emailed to andy.todd@mssm.edu or mailed to:

Andrew C. Todd, Ph.D.
Director, Insulators’ Tissue Bank
Mount Sinai Medical Center
17 E. 102nd St., W. Tower, 2nd floor, room 133
New York, NY 10029

For more general information on the importance of tissue banking to medical research, please view the following documents:

- National Cancer Institute’s brochure ‘Providing Your Tissue for Research:What You Need To Know’.
- Research Advocacy Network’s brochure ‘Why is it important for me to consider donating my tissue for research? A booklet for prospective donors’

Dr. Andrew Todd can be reached by phone at 212-824-7053 or email at andy.todd@mssm.edu.

The ITB is supported by the International Association of Heat & Frost Insulators and Allied Workers and by donations from Locals and individuals.

OSHA PUBLISHES NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING UPDATING A NATIONAL CONSENSUS STANDARD IN ITS EYE AND FACE PROTECTION STANDARDS

WASHINGTON – The Occupational Safety and Health Administration today published a proposed revision to its Eye and Face Protection Standards that updates personal protective equipment requirements in the agency's general industry, shipyard employment, longshoring, marine terminals and construction standards. The proposed revisions will reflect current national consensus standards and ensure that employers use up-to-date eye and face protection during hazardous workplace operations.

This Notice of Proposed Rulemaking incorporates the latest American National Standards Institute eye and face protection standard, which was adopted after OSHA issued the final rule on personal protective equipment in 2009. The 2009 final rule did not modify the construction standard. This NPRM also updates language in the construction eye and face protection standard to make it more consistent with general industry and maritime standards.

Individuals may submit comments to the NPRM electronically at http://www.regulations.gov, the Federal eRulemaking Portal, by mail or facsimile. See the Federal Register notice for details. Comments must be submitted by April 13, 2015.
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ARMACELL ACQUIRES THE BUSINESS OF INDUSTRIAL THERMO POLYMERS LIMITED (ITP) — A LEADING CANADIAN MANUFACTURER OF EXTRUDED POLYETHYLENE (PE) FORM PRODUCTS

Armacell, a leader in flexible insulation foams for the equipment insulation market and a leading provider of engineered foams, has signed a purchase agreement for the business of Industrial Thermo Polymers Limited (ITP), a leading manufacturer of extruded polyethylene foam products in North America. This transaction significantly strengthens Armacell’s market position and footprint in North America — especially in the pipe insulation business. This acquisition reflects another step in the continuation of Armacell’s internationalization and growth strategy. Furthermore, it firmly establishes Armacell in the new market segments of water toys and backer rods. The closing expected mid-March.

“All of the product segments that ITP is active in – such as pipe insulation, backer rods and water toys – exhibit strong growth rates. The predicted rebound of the overall US construction market and the strengthening of the US dollar, which both have a significant impact on the company’s sales, make ITP an attractive investment for us”, explains Patrick Mathieu, CEO of Armacell International S.A. “ITP possesses decades of technology know-how in the production of extruded polyethylene tubes and profiles. We are looking forward to having such an experienced team on board.”

“In Armacell ITP has found a successor with a global growth strategy, where it can leverage the production capabilities, specifically polyethylene extrusion, and know-how developed at ITP over the past 35 years,” says Steve Hartman, President of Industrial Thermo Polymers Ltd. “ITP also offers Armacell a strategic foothold in the Canadian market place. I am excited and confident that it will build on what we have created and be a great home for our people.”

ITP, which was founded in 1980 and maintains headquarters in Ontario, Canada, is a leading manufacturer of extruded polyethylene foam products in North America. Under the brand name Tundra, ITP manufactures products in a broad range of markets, including standard and self-sealing pipe insulation, insulating foam filler and water toys. In addition, ITP is also North America's foremost manufacturer of sealant joint backer rod products for the waterproofing industry. In 2014, it generated revenue of approx. C$ 30 million.
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NEW YORK – March 19, 2015 – At a seasonally adjusted annual rate of $724.3 billion, new construction starts in February advanced 16% compared to the previous month, according to Dodge Data & Analytics. Much of the lift came from three massive projects valued each in excess of $1 billion that were included as February construction starts. The non-building construction sector was boosted by an $8.4 billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) export terminal in Louisiana and a $1.2 billion solar power facility in California, while nonresidential building registered a sharp gain partly as the result of a $3.0 billion petrochemical plant in Texas. Residential building also strengthened in February, as growth for multifamily housing outweighed a loss of momentum by single family housing. For the first two months of 2015, total construction starts on an unadjusted basis were up 34% from the same period a year ago. If projects in excess of $1 billion are excluded, the result would be more moderate gains for total construction – up 10% in February on a seasonally adjusted basis relative to January, and up 8% on an unadjusted basis during the first two months of 2015 relative to the same period a year ago.

The February statistics produced a reading of 153 for the Dodge Index (2000=100), compared to a revised 132 for January. For 2014 as whole, the Dodge Index averaged 123. “Due to the presence of several unusually large projects, the first two months of 2015 witnessed an especially elevated level of activity that’s exceeded the underlying trend for construction starts,” stated Robert A. Murray, chief economist for Dodge Data & Analytics. “Some pullback can be expected in coming months, since there are only a limited number of LNG-related projects that may reach the construction start stage and petrochemical plants are not likely to match the exceptional amount that was reported last year, particularly with the recent decline in oil prices.”

“At the same time, the first two months of 2015 have shown several noteworthy features that point towards the continued expansion for overall construction activity.” Murray continued. “For commercial building, both office buildings and hotels are continuing to track upward, supported by the increasing amount of private financing directed at real estate development. For institutional building, school construction is now seeing the benefits of large school construction bond measures that were approved in recent years, while healthcare facilities registered an unexpectedly strong performance in February. For residential building, multifamily housing continues to show brisk development activity in major cities. One area of concern for overall construction activity in 2015 relates to single family housing – will it be able to move beyond the extended plateau that took hold in 2014? Another area of concern relates to public works and specifically highway and bridge construction – will Congress be able to reach agreement on a new multiyear federal transportation bill by the end of May, or at the very least a continuing resolution that shores up the depleted Highway Trust Fund?”

Non-residential building, at $224.9 billion (annual rate), surged 42% in February after a relatively weak performance in January. The manufacturing building category was a major contributor, soaring 663% in February with $3.0 billion for the estimated construction start cost of the Formosa ethane cracker and propane dehydrogenation plant in Point Comfort TX. The next largest manufacturing building starts in February were considerably smaller in scale – a $169 million manufacturing research lab in California and a $43 million carpet manufacturing plant in Georgia. If the manufacturing building category is excluded, non-residential building in February would still have registered a 19% gain. The commercial building group grew 19% in February, with a varied performance by project type. Hotel construction bounced back 83% after a depressed January, led by $138 million for the hotel portion of the $400 million Four Seasons mixed-use tower in Boston MA and $108 million for the hotel portion of the $245 million Stadium Towers mixed-use project in Seattle WA. Office construction in February climbed 19%, featuring groundbreaking for these projects – a $400 million office building at the Hudson Yards development site in New York NY, a $150 million office building in Seattle WA, and $112 million for the office portion of the Stadium Towers mixed-use project in Seattle WA. Both stores and warehouses registered a slower pace for construction starts in February, with stores down 9% and warehouses down 15%.

The institutional side of the non-residential building market rebounded 20% in February after a lackluster January. Educational facilities, the largest non-residential building category by dollar volume, grew 14% as it regained the upward momentum that was established in 2014. Large educational facility projects that reached groundbreaking in February included a $133 million high school in Spring TX, a $67 million public safety training facility (for fire and rescue personnel) in Gaithersburg MD, a $61 million high school in Maywood CA, and a $60 million business school at the University of California Berkeley. Healthcare facilities in February jumped 92% after a weak January, reflecting the start of these hospital projects – the $540 million Methodist Hospital North Campus Tower in Houston TX, the $228 million Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital in Lake Forest IL, and the $165 million Cambridge North Tower in Kansas City KS. The smaller institutional categories in February were mixed, with gains reported for transportation terminals, up 27%; and public buildings, up 22%; while declines were reported for churches, down 26%; and amusement-related projects, down 45%.
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