Notes From The Director

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) conducts a comprehensive assessment of our nation’s infrastructure every four years. The result of this assessment is a report card that grades 16 infrastructure categories including among them dams, aviation, bridges, drinking water, wastewater, and roads to name a few. A simple grade of A to F is assigned on the basis of capacity, condition, funding, future needs, operation & maintenance, public safety, and resilience.

The 2013 report card was issued earlier this year which showed a resounding improvement from 2009 from an overall rating of D to D+. This puts us just a half step away from being mediocre, yeah!!.

As you read the report, which by the way is available at www.infrastructurereportcard.com (and as a really cool mobile app), you find that the primary reason for these low grades is lack of funding. A good example of this is the Highway Trust Fund, which was created in 1956 to help build the interstate highway system. The fund is financed through a federal tax of 18.3 cents/gallon of gasoline and 24.4 cents/gallon of diesel fuel. The tax has not been adjusted since 1993 yet the overall funding level has dropped due to more fuel efficient vehicles. This fund may actually run out of money by the end of the year if congress doesn’t act.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that we are going to see major increases in infrastructure funding anytime soon. But that doesn’t mean there are not things that we, as an industry, can do. When dollars are stretched thin, there need to be more creative and innovative solutions to meet our infrastructure needs and precasters are in a unique position to deliver such solutions. Products such as precast paving slabs and the NEXT Beam are just two shining examples of the types of products that will help raise the grade, yet again, for America’s infrastructure.

Warmest Regards,

Ronald E. Thornton, P.E.
Parking Structures are Essential for Municipal Growth

The city of Binghamton, NY has seen a much needed resurgence over the last few years due, in large part, to the growth of Binghamton University. The recent addition of a downtown campus and student housing has resulted in the opening of several new restaurants, micro-breweries, and other stores.

While this is great news for a local economy that has struggled for many years from a hemorrhaging of manufacturing jobs throughout the 80’s and 90’s, there is one nagging issue that, unless it is adequately resolved, will severely limit the potential for further expansion - PARKING.

The city currently has three aging parking structures, each of which has been identified with major structural deficiencies. Even if they were in pristine condition, they clearly lack the capacity necessary to meet the long term needs of this community. City council recently approved funds for a detailed parking study to be conducted this year. The study is certainly an important step but the obvious solution is to develop a long term strategy to replace the existing structures with new ones constructed with durable, sustainable, and economical precast concrete. Binghamton, like many upstate communities, has an historic appeal and, with its endless array of aesthetic options, precast offers the unique ability to blend in with nearly any existing architecture.

PCI Partners with the International Parking Institute for Webinar

PCI has announced a partnership with IPI to present a special webinar this June to focus on high performance concrete structures. Presented by Rita Seraderian, PE, LEED AP, of PCI New England, the webinar will discuss attributes of high-performance parking structures, innovations in parking structure design, structural systems, and proper maintenance. The webinar is scheduled for June 17 and 19.

Other webinars being offered by PCI this year include “Precast Concrete: Reduces Risk and Professional Liability” on April 29 and May 1 and “Using Life Cycle Assessment in Designing High-Performance Buildings” on August 19 and 21.

More information can be found on PCI’s website at www pci org.

New York State Parking Association Spring Training 2014

NYSPA’s spring training event will be held April 15th at Traditions at the Glen in Johnson City. Sessions for this event “will be looking into the world of parking from the early years to today”. Attendees will learn much about where the parking industry has been and where they are going.

More information can be found on NYSPA’s website at www nyspa net.
Precast Concrete Used for Wine Fermentation

We are always searching for interesting and innovative applications for precast concrete and, being someone who enjoys a little more than the occasional glass of wine, could not help but be intrigued by the use of concrete fermentation tanks.

Sonoma Cast Stone, located in the heart of California Wine Country, makes fermentation tanks in a variety of shapes and sizes. Concrete tanks have been found to have a number of advantages over both oak and stainless steel:

- Concrete has superior thermal mass, which makes it a natural insulator. This allows for better stabilization of temperatures.
- The porosity and texture of concrete is ideal for fermentation.
- According to one California winemaker “…concrete gives the wine the weight and texture of a barrel fermentation, but rather than tasting like a barrel, the wine tastes like where it was grown”.

With some 320 wineries and growing throughout New York State, we cannot help but wonder if there is a potential market here for this type of product. Any takers?

NPCA Product Committee Develops Lunch & Learn Presentation

The Utility Structures Product Committee of NPCA has developed a comprehensive program to help engineers better understand how precast utility structures are specified, designed, manufactured, and installed. The program, which was rolled out at this year’s Precast Show in Houston, includes topics such as specifying, ordering, design, production, shipping, handling, and installation.

Precast utility products are used for a wide range of applications including electrical, gas, water & wastewater, telecommunications and even emerging technologies such as solar panel and wind turbine foundations.

For more information on this or other educational programs, please visit NPCA at [www.precast.org](http://www.precast.org) or contact PCANY at 607-595-1636.
Jefferson Concrete Featured in NPCA Blog

PCANY Member company Jefferson Concrete Corp was prominently featured in the March 2014 NPCA Blog aptly titled “Meet a Precaster”. VP Mark Thompson answers a number of questions about the history of the company, unique projects, and precast in general. You can find the blog at www.precast.org/blog/

PCI Accepting Applications for Design Awards Competition

PCI is now accepting applications for the 2014 design awards competition. The deadline for submission is May 19, 2014 and winners will be showcased at the PCI Convention and National Bridge Conference this September. For more information visit www.pci.org

PCANY Spring Meeting Date Set

It’s time to mark your calendars for the Spring 2014 PCANY meeting on Thursday May 22. The morning session will be held at 9AM at the AGC conference room, 10 Airline Dr. in Albany. The afternoon will be a joint session with NYSDOT in their first floor conference room at 50 Wolf Rd.