Notes From The Director

I had the pleasure of attending the NPCA Precast Show in Houston this February as I have for the last 17 years. Not only is it great to meet with and talk to precasters from all over the country, but I find it particularly impressive to see first hand how the precast industry invests in its people. NPCA offers a number of quality educational programs including three levels of Production & Quality School as part of its Precast University leading to the designation of “Master Precaster” or “Master Prestresser”. These programs were developed in conjunction with industry experts, producers, DOT’s and academia and include courses in production, safety, technical, quality control, and leadership. Being somewhat business minded for an engineer, I wondered about the return on investment for a small to mid-sized precast manufacturer to take people off the production floor and send them half way across the country to participate in these classes. (Also, since I was teaching one of the classes, I wanted to be sure I was providing something of value to the industry).

Jefferson Concrete Corp. of Watertown currently has four Master Precasters working in their plant. Mark Thompson, Vice President of Jefferson tells me that his plant has seen a marketable improvement in leadership on the production floor as a result of their training investment and plans to put at least three more employees through the Precast University program this year.

These investments clearly benefit the producer by having a well trained, motivated staff that produces efficiently and with fewer errors. But the investment also benefits contractors, engineers, and owners with high quality products produced and delivered on time.

Warmest Regards,

Ronald E. Thornton, P.E.
New York State Electrical Grid System—Precast Breaker Foundation Slabs

Thirty of the slabs shown above were produced by Kistner Concrete Products of Lockport for the New York State Electrical Grid System. Each slab is 10’ x 10’ x 10” thick and weighs approximately 7 tons. Slabs like these are routinely used to anchor above ground utility boxes such as breakers, transformers, and switch gears to provide a secure level base to set them on and to keep them from blowing away during high wind events.

Pads can be cast essentially to any size needed and can come with customized openings for conduits and grounding rods. They can also be cast with threaded inserts or uni-strut anchors for readily securing equipment and housings to the foundation.

Precast is an obvious choice for utility foundation slabs due to ease of installation and the ability to secure equipment and housings immediately after setting without having to wait for site cast concrete to cure.

Precast foundation pads can also be used as a support for propane and industrial gas tanks, solar panels, and pretty much anything that requires a concrete base. Simply contact your local precaster for additional information.
Zeiser Vault Renews PCANY Septic Tank Certification

In 2004, PCANY instituted a voluntary certification program for precast concrete septic tanks. The purpose of the program is to assure the public and approving agencies that septic tanks have been subjected to rigorous testing and evaluation. To be considered for listing, each producer must submit a test report certified by a New York State licensed Professional Engineer. Each listed tank must be tested for both watertightness and structural integrity in accordance with ASTM C1227, “Standard Specification for Precast Concrete Septic Tanks. To be considered watertight, a tank must withstand a vacuum pressure of 4” of mercury for five minutes without any loss of pressure.

For structural integrity, a tank must be tested to an applied load that is at least 1.5 times the anticipated actual load. Anticipated loads include vertical dead and live loads as well as lateral soil loads. Minimum design service load on a tank should be no less than 300psf. This equates to approximately 7” of mercury when vacuum tested and with the appropriate safety factor applied.

Zeiser Wilbert Vault of Elmira recently submitted their annual compliance report for 2014. The PCANY Certification Program for Water and Wastewater Products requires that tanks be tested and PE certified annually. Four of Zeiser’s tanks were tested and certified by Watson Engineering of Owego, NY. Zeiser’s General Manager, Jeremy Sherman, states that the program as a great way to assure his customers, homeowners, and county officials that their tanks conform to industry standards.

Certified tanks can be readily identified by the distinctive red “PCANY LISTED” tag cast into each structure. A complete listing of certified tanks may be found on our website at www.pcany.org.
Delta Employee Receives Promotion
Kim Kvassay of Delta Engineers, Architects, & Land Surveyors, P.C. was recently promoted to Project Engineer. Kim works with Delta’s Specialty Precast Group and is responsible for project estimates, client communications, project management, and quality control.

NYSDOT Releases 2013 Audit Results
The Materials Bureau has issued a summary of their 2013 QC/QA audit findings for precast concrete manufacturers. The audits were conducted throughout the year rating producer compliance in 20 distinct categories. The trend line shows continuous improvement in overall conformance from 89% in 2010 to 91% in 2013. This is a great example of the Department working together with Industry to improve quality.

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.