



## New Hampshire/ Vermont Chapter

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# Action

March 2010

**ANNUAL WAGE & BENEFIT SURVEY RESULTS AVAILABLE** -- ABC NH/VT's "2010 Construction Industry Wage & Benefit Survey Results" are now available to members. The annual survey data, collected from December 2009 – February 2010, included responses from 85 contractors, with an average of 61 employees and an average annual volume of \$14 million. The responses covered wage and benefit practices for 26 classifications of employees. The survey results showed that the average change in the base wage for the classifications reported ranged from a decrease of 9% to an increase of 15% from last year. The average base wage for all classifications combined showed virtually no change from last year. Further, 56% of employers responding to the survey are providing some variation of bonus or incentive compensation in addition to the base wage, this is down 10% from last year. 96% of employers continue to provide health insurance for employees, yet deductibles have increased (\$1782 average for single plan, \$4620 average for family plan) and the amount of the employer contribution has decreased slightly to 70%, from 71%. Some employer contributions are based on tenure and some employers establish maximum dollar amounts, not percentages for their contribution. Even with increased deductibles health insurance premiums increased 6% from last years survey for single coverage and 5% for family coverage. 24% of survey respondents offer an HSA or HRA option, up 4% from last year and 16% self-insure a portion of the health insurance cost, down 4% from last year.

This survey is the only one of its kind available in our area. We appreciate the response from members to assure we received data to provide the most valuable information for as many employee classifications as possible. The survey data is extremely important to:

- Provide members with valuable information to maintain competitive wage and benefit practices,
- Support owners who may be purchasing construction services and are subjected to union campaigns that include inaccurate statements about merit shop wage and benefit practices,
- Provide legislators and other public policy decision-makers factual, documented evidence of the wage and benefit practices of merit shop contractors.

Please contact the Chapter Office for a copy of the Survey Results.

**EMPLOYEE BENEFIT COST SAVINGS** -- Again this year, one very specific "discovery" from the Survey Results is the potential cost savings that may be available to members through the ABC Merit Choice Dental program. 74% of employers responding to the survey are providing dental insurance for employees, up 4% from last year and contributing on average 38% of the premium, down 10% from last year. The average single-monthly-premium is \$42 dollars, the average family-monthly-premium is \$115 dollars. Although a variety of plans are available through the Merit Choice program the top single-monthly-premium with Merit Choice is \$27 and the top family-monthly-premium is under \$80. If any employer would like additional information please contact the Chapter Office.

**CONSTRUCTION PROCUREMENT LEGISLATION PASSES STATE SENATE** -- The NH Senate has passed two bills targeting the state's procurement practices.

**Senate Bill 493** - establishes a Best Value procurement commission specifically for the purchasing of construction services. Among the duties of the commission will be the investigation of current construction procurement practices for NH projects and the investigation of contracting practices used in other states. The commission will also identify the definition of Best Value and propose a pilot program for the implementation of Best Value contracting, including guidelines, standards, definitions, and criteria for use in the pilot program. The commission will propose standards to measure the success of the pilot program and determine the implementation to all state contracts.

**Senate Bill 495** - establishes a task force to study policies and procedures for all state procurement, including construction. Among the duties of the task group will be the review of procurement systems in other states, consideration whether state procurement procedures should award preference to NH based businesses and whether state procurement procedures should award preference to companies providing sustainable wages and health insurance to their workers.

ABC appreciates and recognizes the challenge and responsibility of managing public funds and providing public services, including

OVER

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construction. We have urged the legislators to be very clear with the purpose of any criteria to be established and to be aware that some criteria can limit market participation in public construction, inflate cost and harm local workers and contractors. How will the criteria be scored, how will public officials be held accountable for controlling any confidential business information and will there be safeguards against favoritism are some of the comments expressed by ABC during hearings. Both bills will now "cross over" from the Senate to the House where hearings will be held and ABC will continue to represent our position and participate in the discussion. Any member who would like more information on either of these bills or any other legislative activity is urged to contact the Chapter Office.

## PLA PROPOSED FOR VERMONT BRIDGE PROJECT --

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) is proposing a Project Labor Agreement (PLA) for the new Lake Champlain Bridge Project, on the state line between Crown Point NY and Chimney Point VT. PLAs require all contractors working on the project to execute a union agreement, hire union workers, pay into union funds and operate under union work rules and conditions. ABC has urged the Vermont Agency of Transportation to intercede and object to the proposed PLA for this Federally assisted project (80% Federal assistance for the projected \$75 million cost). The joint authority and co-agency function of NYSDOT and the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), including the equal investment of a projected \$7,500,000 in taxpayer's dollars from each state for the bridge project (10% of cost for each state), demands open, objective discussion and decision-making involving both state agencies. While both states are committed to restoring the bridge service as quickly as possible, there appears to be little consideration of VTrans or the State of Vermont in the decision to propose a PLA. The NYSDOT obviously does not consider the State of Vermont or its taxpayers as interested or affected. The Vermont Legislature and the Secretary of the Vermont Agency of Transportation have communicated their objection to the PLA to the NY State Department of Transportation.

In summary, the best interest being served by a PLA is construction trade unions. Requiring non-union contractors to execute union agreements for the project, agreeing to replace their employees with union workers, pay into union funds and abide by union work rules and conditions creates unknown costs that are impossible to plan and bid for and are conditions that make it non-competitive for non-union contractors. To suggest that a non-union contractor's ability to compete is not impacted by a PLA is untrue. To present a PLA as an effort to create harmony and to establish a resolution to any potential disputes is misleading and promotes a procurement process that supports favoritism.

In Vermont, statistics for 2009 show total construction trade employment at 13,987 with 625 or 4.5% being union members. A Project Labor Agreement

is authorized discrimination against over 9 out of 10 Vermont construction workers who choose not to join a union. ABC in New York and Vermont are working at the State and Federal level to prevent the proposed PLA.

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OPPS PROVIDED AT ABC MEETINGS --

March 16 - School Construction Projects On Tuesday, March 9th, town meetings/ballots will determine funding for school building activity. The list of proposed new construction, renovation and additions includes over \$250 million in potential projects. **On March 16th ABC has scheduled a meeting to present information** on the status of the projects, future building aid funding activity and to provide an opportunity for questions on school project planning and administration. The presenter will be Ed Murdough, Administrator, Office of Building Aid, NH Dept of Education. The School Building Aid Program provides financial reimbursement for the cost of construction or substantial renovation of school buildings. The office also provides information and technical advice concerning planning, construction, and maintenance of school.

## March 23 - Meet The Generals

Members doing business with members has always been a feature of ABC membership. To promote that philosophy, ABC will be showcasing ten (10) General Contractors / Construction Managers at another special **Meet The Generals networking event on Tue, March 23**. ABC NH/VT invites subcontractors to be a part of this unique networking event.

To register or for more info on these two March Business Development opportunities, contact the Chapter Office or go to [www.abcnhvt.org](http://www.abcnhvt.org), go to calendar, click View All and select your event.

## SAFETY AWARD APPLICATION DEADLINE - APRIL 15th --

All Contractor & Supplier members should have received notice of the 2010 ABC NH/VT Annual Safety Awards Program. You are encouraged to submit your Entry to receive recognition for your efforts to provide a safe workplace. Share the recognition with your employees and promote pride and increased morale for a job well done!

The Safety Award Program is also a great opportunity to receive recognition to support enhanced prequalification by owners. In fact, increasingly the data submitted on the awards application is being required by owners.

Annual Construction Industry Safety Awards are presented for the 'best', 'most improved' and 'most creative' safety programs among the "large" and "small" member firms that submit entries. Applications are easy to complete and the potential rewards are great.

## ENTRY DEADLINE - THU APRIL 15

**ABC's ANNUAL AWARDS EVENT - THU MAY 20**

THE EVENT CENTER AT C.R. SPARKS, BEDFORD NH

**2010 SAFETY AWARDS APPLICATION - [WWW.ABCNHVT.ORG](http://WWW.ABCNHVT.ORG)**

**OR CONTACT THE ABC CHAPTER OFFICE.**