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## **Has this been a year to remember or a year to forget?**

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Despite the federal stimulus, it's been a tough year to be a subcontractor in Massachusetts, or anywhere in the country, for that matter....unless you do paving work. Jobs in both the public and private marketplace have been few and far between, competition for the work has been fierce, and every company has been forced to lay off employees or otherwise cut back in some way. Surprisingly, though, few companies have gone out of business altogether. Bring a group of subcontractors together, and the talk is all about holding on, adjusting to "the new normal" and waiting for the tide to turn.

Fortunately, there are now signs the tide may be starting to turn, with a number of major retail, residential and institutional projects underway locally - while on Wall Street, the stock market continues trending upward. While no one expects a return to the way things were anytime soon, it is good to see and hear signs of hope.

Meanwhile, here at ASM, we have been very fortunate. Like most employers, we put our hiring plans on hold in 2009, but were able to put members to work building our first office, which in turn has improved our ability to serve the membership. Throughout the year, ASM has focused on providing the support members need at times like these. We held monthly educational programs on bottom line topics, and assisted members in resolving dozens of legal issues. In the Legislature, we were successful in getting a waiver of the sales tax increase for construction, saving members thousands of dollars on the purchase of materials. And more recently, we have made great strides on legislation to protect payment rights - a top priority for all contractors.

2010 will continue to be a year of challenge, no doubt, but at ASM, we will continue to help members meet the challenges head on. Over the next several months, let's hope the news continues to get better, for all of us!

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