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Chairman's message: Go home the way you came in...

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Contractors by their nature are numb to risk. We routinely compete and bid for work that could potentially put our companies out of business (and we do this a couple times a week!) The skilled tradespeople within our companies walk around construction sites all day with cranes working overhead, crews working underfoot in trenches, all while heavy equipment maneuvers around them. Why do we do it?

For me it's the perfect combination of two loves- competing and getting to "build stuff." I was raised on playing fields across southeastern Connecticut playing sports and competing to win- not to just play- but to win. I still vividly remember Christmas morning in 1972 and unwrapping a shiny new bucket of Lincoln Logs. Those two "loves" continue for me today, but on a much larger and more dangerous scale.

The industrial accident at Kleen Energy Systems in Middletown, Conn. in which five fellow construction workers lost their lives should make us pause and appreciate the grave dangers of our business. As someone whose day job involves the mechanical trades, pipe-welding and fitting, the events leading up to the accident were especially sobering, as it was something as mundane as purging a natural gas line. As I watched the news accounts and read the newspaper stories I was stunned at the absolute devastation of the facility. At the same time I was deeply saddened for the families and the friends of those lost or seriously injured.

Safety is a very personal responsibility. Wherever and whenever we see an unsafe act or condition we must stop our work until it is rectified. The cost of not doing so is too high. At DECCO we try and personalize safety- reminding our partners that their families won't be issuing "written warnings" if they don't come home.

So to all my fellow colleagues across the construction industry, continue doing what you love to do - "build stuff" and compete like hell for your company and your workers - but never lose sight of the fact that there are spouses and children waiting at home at the end of the day. Michael Rosario, a representative of the local Plumbers and Pipefitters union in Conn., summed it up best in a recent quote I read online: "We hug our families, kiss our children...We go to work, and we want to come home at the end of the day, safe. That didn't happen for a few people yesterday."

At ABC Massachusetts our hearts go out the friends, family, and co-workers of those lost and injured in that devastating accident.

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