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President's message: Ready or not, spring is here!

April 06, 2010 - Rhode Island

While most segments of the residential construction market might continue to lag, there is still plenty of work to be done, especially if we are taking smaller jobs we might have passed on in better times. This means that we must be ready for spring in more ways than one.

There are, of course, the most basic, common-sense activities we should see to before even leaving the shop. This includes checking all equipment that was put away last fall and hasn't been used for several months. Items such as fall restraints, ladders and staging should not be neglected. Supplies that should be on hand and in good condition include gloves, respirators, safety glasses, hard hats, warning signs, etc.

Read through this issue of The Rhode Island Builder Report and you'll see why these preparations for outdoor work will be especially important where OSHA might be concerned.

Just as important in preparing for spring and summer work is your own education and professional development. This includes taking general and trade-specific classes offered by the Rhode Island Builders Association through The RIBA Institute. Keep an eye on your mail and on The Rhode Island Builder Report for ongoing information.

I'm thinking especially of the EPA's complex Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) regulations, which take effect in April. RIBA has already offered two seminars on this topic and will continue to respond to your need for information.

This is also the time to be aware of the professional designations available from the National Association of Home Builders, with classes available through RIBA. These designations not only place you in the top rank of professionals in our industry, they provide a tremendous boost for your marketing efforts with the public.

Bagging those illegal contractors

Speaking of OSHA, I have been very glad to hear that there is communication, even if unofficial, between the federal agency and the Rhode Island Contractors' Registration and Licensing Board (CRLB). OSHA has been providing the CRLB with information on violations on construction sites so that the state agency can verify that the contractors cited are legally registered.

This speaks to one of the greatest problems in our industry: Illegal contractors stealing work from those of us who obey the law. Shared information between agencies in this matter creates a win-win situation. We might have to work hard to keep up with OSHA compliance and changing regulations, but we can all be grateful that they are making this direct effort to help us.

In another important matter, I sincerely thank all our members who worked so hard to defeat the effort to require residential fire sprinklers in new home construction in Rhode Island. I especially thank all those who turned out on March 4 at the Building Code Standards Committee (BCSC) hearing.

Much of this success can be attributed to the efforts of Bob DeBlois and other members of RIBA's

Code Committee, who gave up their Monday mornings for the last several months to meet and develop our position. These include Dave Caldwell Sr., Ron Smith, Dick Welch, George Calcagni, Mark VanNoppen and Jack Anderson, ably assisted by Executive Director Roger Warren. While not a committee member, Jim Sloan, our general counsel, played an active role in advising the committee throughout this process.

The turnout of our board of directors, and even the general membership, on March also provided support to the BCSC to stay the course in the face of pressure from the other side. We were very pleased with this turnout as it demonstrated that "The Builders" are serious about their opposition to sprinklers.

May we all have a good and prosperous spring and summer season!

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