

Serving the Unionized Building Construction Industry During an Extraordinarily Challenging Year

Last year presented challenges never before faced in the construction industry, requiring an immediate and robust plan of action. The Construction Employers' Association (CEA) responded by devoting considerable resources to support its Northern California unionized building contractor members in navigating through the COVID-19 pandemic's landmines.

CEA staff and legal counsel have worked diligently to keep abreast of the ever changing safety protocols recommended or mandated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the California Dept. of Public Health, the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA), and local public health officers, along with COVID-19-related federal and state laws. Since mid-March, CEA has hosted 34 weekly COVID-19 conference calls with a panel of experts—including two to three attorneys, CEA staff and a legislative advocate—to provide information, answer questions and share best practices.

CEA distributed a sample “COVID-19 Exposure, Prevention, Preparedness and Response Plan for Construction” in the spring, a “COVID-19 Claims Handling and Risk Mitigation Strategy” white paper

in the summer, and more recently partnered with Littler Mendelson to distribute a model COVID-19 prevention plan after the adoption of the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards.

During this unprecedented time, CEA and its members have worked closely with their labor partners and subcontractors to keep California's unionized building construction industry open and jobsites safe. The industry's culture of health and safety as the top priority and its commitment to training to the highest safety standards prepared it to quickly respond

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to necessary COVID-19 safety protocols, including site-specific COVID-19 safety plans, social distancing, jobsite personal hygiene, personal protective equipment, jobsite sanitizing, discouraging of carpooling, monitoring and enforcing of COVID-19-related site safety requirements and documenting of these efforts. Despite the many challenges, CEA members have remained flexible, resourceful and committed to providing safe workplaces.

Last spring, CEA coordinated industry labor/management letters to the governor, legislative leadership and the public health directors for the seven Bay Area counties, outlining the many safety precautions that the unionized construction industry was taking to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 spread on its construction projects.

CEA also conducted two confidential surveys to gauge the incidence and

transmission of COVID-19 positive cases among CEA members and their subcontractors on Northern California projects. Given the surge in positive cases in the general population, CEA's intent was to collect relevant data to demonstrate to state and local policymakers the safety of the unionized building construction industry for purposes of keeping jobsites open. The survey results supported CEA's contention that transmission of the virus was rarely occurring on jobsites and demonstrated the effectiveness of the industry's robust safety protocols in preventing the spread of COVID-19 infections among the workforce.

CEA's sole purpose remains to protect and promote the interests of the unionized building construction industry in Northern California, and it will continue its focus on supporting its members in navigating the challenging and fluid environment brought about by COVID-19. CEA will also continue to provide quality labor relations and collective bargaining representation, safety excellence recognition and advocacy, and legislative and regulatory advocacy to its members, and financial support to eight California construction management university programs with annual grants totaling \$200,000.

Comprised of more than 110 of the largest union signatory commercial builders in California, CEA members perform in excess of \$30 billion annually in public and private building construction volume. CEA general contractors perform a significant percentage of all non-transportation state and local public works projects. Its members build educational facilities, commercial buildings, hospitals, medical centers, research facilities, multifamily low-income and market-rate housing projects, government buildings, energy and power projects, laboratory and technology projects, sports stadiums, water infrastructure projects and parking structures. ♦



Construction Employers' Association leadership worked closely with its partners to keep Northern California unionized building construction sites open and safe.