



December 2, 2009

Upcoming Ohio Valley NARI Events

Save the Date: December 10, 2009 – 6:30pm: Ohio Valley NARI will be hosting our Annual Evening of Excellence at the Montgomery Inn located in Montgomery, OH. Come join us as we recognize our local CotY recipients as well as swearing in the new Board of Directors. The cost for this year's event is \$60.00 per person for all pre-registrants (\$70.00 per person at the door). Pre-registering is easier than ever, visit www.naricincinnati.org to register on line or call 1.800.498.NARI and RSVP today!

January 14, 2010: Ohio Valley NARI will be conducting our first Member Open House of the year hosted by Building Value. Building Value's new location is 4040 Spring Grove Avenue, Cincinnati. There is no cost for this event and the topic of the program will be Green Building. The program will begin at 6:00pm and will wrap up no later than 9:00pm. Please visit www.naricincinnati.org or call 1.800.498.NARI and register today!

Special Seminar: February 10th, 2010 – 8:00am – 4:00pm: Ohio Valley NARI along with Roth & Associates will be presenting a Sandler Sales Training Program. Highlights: Why salespeople fail... and what to do about it. • How traditional sales practices turn salespeople into unpaid consultants. • How to get to the real decision maker. • How to touch 100% of your desirable opportunities, 100% of the time. • Why everyone looks busy, but sales remain low. • Do your salespeople have what it takes to succeed in today's volatile economy and marketplace? • Is your sales management strategy and structure optimized to produce the results YOU need to succeed? The cost for this program has been reduced to \$250 a person for Ohio Valley NARI members. For more information or visit www.naricincinnati.org or call 1.800.498.NARI and register today!

Contractor Cited for Multiple Safety Violations

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration has proposed \$146,000 in penalties against an Alabama construction firm for multiple safety violations, including 11 repeat violations.

The company has 15 business days from the receipt of the citations to contest the violations and proposed penalties.

The case against T&C Construction in Hoover, Ala., stemmed from an OSHA Regional Emphasis Program on falls when an OSHA compliance officer observed that employees

laying brick on a residential house were exposed to a fall hazard.

T&C was cited with 11 repeat violations, with proposed penalties of \$131,200. The violations are alleged to include:

- *Lack of a company safety program*
- *Employees not wearing personal protective equipment*
- *An extension cord made with parts for permanent installation being on the ground*
- *Employees using electrical branch circuits that did not have a ground-fault circuit interrupter*
- *Several deficiencies in scaffolding procedures*
- *Failure to develop, implement or maintain a written hazard communications program for employees working with mortar or cement*

The employer was also cited for five serious safety violations and \$14,800 in proposed penalties:

- *Having no guards on the gear or pulleys on the mixing machine*
- *Using an extension cord that had the grounding prong removed*
- *Having scaffold planking that was not designed by a qualified person and damaged planking that was not replaced or removed*
- *Having no guardrails installed on a ramp being used*
- *Using fabricated scaffold frames that were not joined together with coupling or stacking pins.*

The site was inspected by staff from OSHA's Area Office in Birmingham, Ala.

Landlords Renovating Vacant Properties

Many of the nation's vacant properties may hold potential renovation work for contractors, according to a new survey of landlords.

More than half of smaller, independent landlords who expect the difficult rental market to continue (52%) are renovating their vacant properties, says The National Association of Independent Landlords.

Most of these landlords (76%) are doing so in an effort to attract tenants, says the survey, released this week. And 42% of respondents say they are renovating to keep renters from

moving.

"With so many homes and apartments sitting empty, landlords want their properties to stand out from the competition," said association president Tracey Benson. "Even if landlords have no rent coming in, they need to bite the bullet and make improvements to put their properties on renters' short lists."

Rather than the pricey new floors and stainless appliances that many landlords envision, relatively low-budget investments like painting, new carpeting and even new kitchen cabinet knobs can make a difference.

"Just about any improvement will make a property look better than one that hasn't received much TLC," Benson said.

The National Association of Independent Landlords polled 496 landlords, almost all residential, across the country. The association is the country's largest provider of services for independent landlords. Learn more at www.landlordassociation.com or by calling 800.352.3395.

A Little Competition for Workers Comp?

By Marc Kilmer; Viewpoint from: [The Buckeye Institute for Public Policy Solutions](#), posted November 23, 2009

It's a tough time to be a business owner in Ohio. The rising unemployment rate and daily reports of companies shutting down are clear proof of this. While legislators and the governor look to ineffectual corporate welfare like the Third Frontier program to help businesses, there is another way that can make Ohio more business-friendly: reform the workers' compensation system. It's not a flashy project, but it is vital if Ohio businesses are to stay competitive with companies in other states.

The Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) is a state government department that provides payments to workers injured on the job. It is funded by what are essentially taxes on businesses. The amount of money paid into this fund by business owners can be a significant burden on many, especially in this tough economy.

During the Taft Administration, the BWC was the scene of a number of scandals, including the infamous "coin-gate." Last year its twenty-year-old system for determining rates was modified by a state common pleas judge as a result of a lawsuit. In short, the state's workers' compensation system will not win any awards as Ohio's best-managed government program.

Ohio employers have no choice but to use it, though. Unlike business owners in almost every other state, Ohio employers must pay premiums to the state bureau. While forty-six states either have a private workers' compensation system or allow private companies to compete against the state program, Ohio is one of only four states operating a state-run workers' compensation monopoly.

After the investment scandals in 2005 there was talk of privatizing or partly-privatizing the BWC. Various groups opposed this move, saying that it would jeopardize reforms. Of

course, these reform efforts have not prevented ongoing problems with the BWC.

In the face of problems with their workers' compensation systems, some states have ended their government-run programs. Nevada and West Virginia, for instance, privatized their workers' compensation programs in recent years. Since privatization in West Virginia, claims protests have gone down by 68%, premiums have dropped by 30.3%, and other improvements have taken place.

Even though they work well, private workers' compensation programs are not the norm in most states. Instead, they have a state-run program but private insurers can compete against it. While a completely private workers' compensation system may make the most sense for Ohio, opponents of privatization should have no problem with allowing competition with the current state monopoly. If business owners want another option, there is no reason to deny that to them.

A proposal merely to study allowing competition to the BWC met recently with fierce opposition in the State Senate. Unfortunately, the issue of workers' compensation competition has turned partisan. It should not be. Almost every other state in the union has some form of non-government workers' compensation insurance. Can anyone say with a straight face that Ohio businesses are faring better than their counterparts in other states?

There are many challenges facing Ohio business owners. One of them is paying for workers' compensation insurance. Other states have found a better way of providing this service. If Ohio wants to be have a competitive economy, it should follow the lead of these states and consider private alternatives to its poorly-run state monopoly.

Decking to Rebound; Wood Gaining Share

Demand for residential decking and railing—battered by recent double-digit declines—is expected to increase by 10 percent in 2010, with wood gaining ground against synthetic materials, according to a new forecast.

The North American decking and railing market plummeted from \$4.6 billion in 2006 to \$2.8 billion in 2009, due to job losses, tight credit, devalued homes, the inability to tap into home equity to finance home improvement projects, and record lows in consumer confidence, research firm Principia Partners reports in a new study.

An increase in housing starts and modest growth in remodeling and replacement (R&R) activity will increase the demand for decking and railing, on a value basis, about 10% in 2010 from its bottom in 2009, the Exton, Pa.,-based company reports.

About 6% of the growth will result from volume growth and 4% from product mix and a slight recovery in wood prices. Pent-up demand from consumers will help support decking and railing growth in 2010. Total decking and railing demand is expected to increase from \$2.8 billion in 2009 to \$3.1 billion in 2010.

Decking's return brings another shift in the market, Principia reports: Wood is regaining share from synthetics, which include wood-plastic composites, primarily driven by demand

elasticity due to lumber deflation. Meanwhile, prices for raw materials used in petroleum-based synthetics have increased significantly.

Wood market share, on a volume basis, hit a low in 2007, maintained its position in 2008, and reversed in 2009, the company says.

“Although the entire synthetic category has lost share to wood, demand for cellular vinyl decking has been growing at a double digit rate while the demand for polyolefin-based WPCs has decreased,” says Steve Van Kouteren, a Principal at Principia Partners.

“The future is brighter for decking and railing as homeowner desire for quality leisure time and outdoor living in the backyard or front porch of the home is part of the fabric of American living,” Principia reports.

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