



# PALICA NEWS

*FALL 2018 Edition*

LAND IMPROVEMENT CONTRACTORS OF AMERICA

## WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST CONTRACTOR MEMBERS!

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Lance Birchard  
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Montrose, PA 18801  
Susquehanna County

Diaz Stone & Pallet  
Jeff Walter  
7686 PA 167  
Kingsley, PA 18826  
Susquehanna County

JM Enterprise, LLC  
Janey Sue Brown  
634 Elm Street  
Tionesta, PA 16353  
Forest County

Kruger Construction  
Jim Marzelino  
9 Oakwood Drive  
Scranton, PA 18504  
Lackawanna County

Latona Trucking, Inc.  
Joe Latona  
620 S. Main Street  
Pittston, PA 18640  
Luzerne County

Northeast Site Contractors  
Brian K. Winot  
3240 Oak Lane  
E. Stroudsburg, PA 18302  
Monroe County

Pine Ridge Comm Assoc.  
Alexandra Tutuianu  
4770 Pine Ridge Dr. West  
Bushkill, PA 18324  
Pike County

R III Construction Inc.  
Phil Ronca  
600 Creamery Road  
Nazareth, PA 18064  
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S&G Excavating Co. Inc.  
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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Pennsylvania LICA will hold their state convention next March 15-16<sup>th</sup> at the Best Western Central Premier in Harrisburg PA. Mark your calendars — the website and the Winter Newsletter will have more details on speakers/topics/activities that will be covered that weekend.

**THE OSHA 10 HOUR CERTIFICATION CLASS WILL TAKE PLACE OVER THE 2 DAYS AS WELL – IT WILL BE FREE IF YOU'RE REGISTERED FOR CONVENTION OR \$55/PP IF JUST COMING FOR CLASS.**

### **EROSION CONTROL WORKSHOP- February 14, 2019**

Get an overview of PADEP Chapter 102 regulations and detailed information on erosion and sediment control measures in PA. Workshop participants will also receive a field guide to better understand the inspection process.

Call Melinda Muehlbronner from the Allegheny Conservation District for more info at 412-241-7645

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello PALICA Members,

First I would like to thank Bill and Betty Guiste for hosting our PALICA picnic again this year. If you were not with us, you sure missed some great food and fun time.

I really would like to see more of our members becoming Active Members. What do I mean by this? Come to at least one of our meetings... I am sure if you did you would enjoy it and want to come back. We all have different activities, but share our goal of promoting this great association.

It is not too early to be thinking about attending the National LICA Convention in February. There will be more information about this Convention in the upcoming LICA newsletter and on the website. Also, our PALICA Convention will be in March in Harrisburg; please try to attend as it will be well worth your time.

Keep on whatever you are working at and stay SAFE. Our motto should be SAFTY FIRST!

Regards,  
Evelyn Cottrell/President

**SPECIAL THANKS TO  
BETTY & BILL GUISTE  
AND CHRIS MOORE FOR  
HOSTING THE SUMMER  
PICNIC AND MEETING.**



**MAKE PLANS TO  
ATTEND THIS  
AWESOME WEEK!**

### **2019 National LICA Winter Convention**

**El Conquistador, Tucson, AZ  
February 26th - March 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Call: 1-888-370-0980**

**Group Code: LICA**

**Rate: \$179/night, plus taxes  
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**ON NOVEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup> -it matters!**



## 2018 PALICA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS!

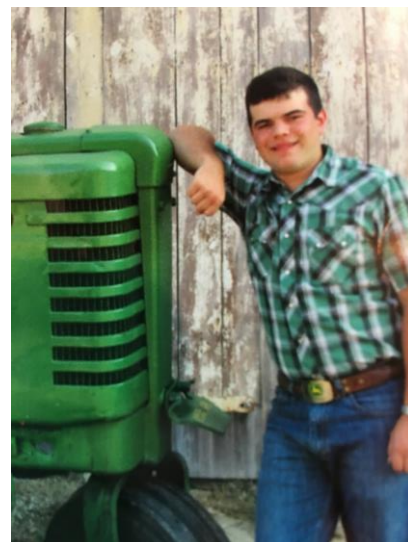
Congratulations to Kelsey & Sam  
who were awarded \$750.00 each



**KELSEY MICKSY**

"I would like to thank the PALICA organization and the board for choosing me as one of their scholarship recipients for 2018. The Scholarship money will be put towards my tuition and books at the University of Kentucky." ....**Kelsey Micsky**

Kelsey is the granddaughter of PALICA members Lawrence & Nancy Micsky, Greenville, PA. Kelsey is attending UK this fall and plans to get a nursing degree. She would like to move back to Cincinnati and is hoping to eventually land a job at Children's Hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio.



**SAMUEL FERSTER**

"Thank you so much for your generous support of my academic future. The world needs more generous organizations like you to aid in the business education/technical education field. When I graduate Potomac State College in Keyser, WV, I will receive A.A.S. in Sustainable Agriculture Entrepreneurship. This degree will be valuable when I work on our family crop farm and excavating business. I have heard many wonderful things about PALICA, as my grandfather, Mark Ferster, was the President and Executive Director for a number of years. I plan to continue to be a member of PALICA and maybe someday become as active as my grandfather was. Please continue to support students like myself, it really shows that there are organizations with kind hearts who support hard-working people of our nation."

.....**Samuel Ferster**

**SEE PAGE 4 UNDER "MEMBER NEWS" FOR  
INFO ON HOW YOU CAN DONATE TOWARDS  
THE PALICA SCHOLARSHIP FUND!**



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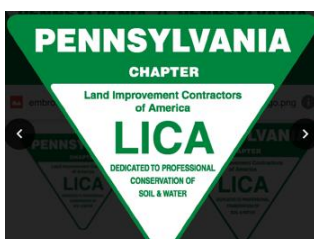
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**Newsletter Editor**  
Joanie Micsky



### MEMBER NEWS ABOUT YOUR DUES & MORE

- ♦ Dues for the 2018-19 year were mailed out a few weeks ago....**please remit payment before the new fiscal year begins on November 1<sup>st</sup>.**
- ♦ If you became a member of PALICA through your insurance agent to get a discount on your business insurance, **YOU ARE REQUIRED TO KEEP YOUR PALICA DUES CURRENT EACH YEAR.** If dues lapse, your agent will be notified and that will have an impact on your insurance rates. If you have any questions, about that, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR INSURANCE AGENT.
- ♦ **A PALICA Scholarship Fund donation sheet was included with your dues invoice ....if you are interested in making a donation to the scholarship fund, please contact Joanie Micsky, or just include the donation amount with your dues payment. The recipients of these awards are very appreciative of your generosity as they journey through college.**

### IN OTHER NEWS.....

- ♦ Our new website is up and running (see page 9 for more information on how to log on.) Take a few minutes to look at your benefits in more detail, see who your fellow contractors are throughout the state and utilize the Safety Manual for current OSHA requirements and "Tool Box Talks" with your employees.

# TRENCH SAFETY – PART 2 IN A SERIES

*Death by Trench.....* A copyright credit to Equipment World, a publication of Randall-Reilly.



Sloping. Shoring. Shielding. The basics of trench protection pre-date OSHA's 1989 regulation, yet many contractors still act like they're a mystery.

"You read trench collapse investigations, and it always starts with 'we didn't know,'" says Mitch Post, training and technical services manager for Mabey, a trench shoring manufacturer based in Elkridge, Maryland. "No one goes into work thinking, 'Hey, I'm going to do something that gets someone killed today.'"

"Our biggest competitor is noncompliance," says Dave Nicoli with distributor D. P. Nicoli, Tualatin, Oregon. "They think, 'This will just take a minute.' They think they don't want to waste time putting a trench box in."

## **THE 5' MYTH**

There's also a misconception that contractors don't have to worry about any trench less than 5 feet deep. "OSHA leaves it up to the judgment of the competent person," Post says. "If you get someone hurt or killed in a 3-foot trench, you're every bit as liable as if that trench was 30 feet deep."

"People become complacent because they think the 5-foot level is the safety level, and it's absolutely not," says Alex Roberts, president of S.A.S. Contracting, Bethel, Connecticut.

"If that trench is only 4 feet deep and you bend over to make your connection, the trench can still collapse on top of you."

"You have to be competent to understand the conditions out there," says Victor Serrambana Jr., president of VMS Construction, Vernon, Connecticut. "It really is an experience and training thing."

## **The four basic types of trench protection**

Trench protection measures and systems came under four basic types, which can be accomplished using a variety of methods and equipment.

- ♦ **Sloping** involves cutting back the trench walls at a prescribed angle from the floor to produce a stable slope. Slopes can also be benched in a series of steps.
- ♦ **Shoring** supports trench walls with a system of vertical uprights and/or sheeting and cross braces (shores). Shores put pressure on the vertical uprights and/or sheeting.
- ♦ **Shielding** uses trench boxes or other types of support to protect workers from collapsing material.
- ♦ **Professionally engineered plans** are required for excavations 20 feet deep or more.

Serrambana trains his crews to stop digging if the excavator bucket starts bringing up a different type of soil. "Just keep looking at what's happening with the soil," he says. "It will tell you pretty quickly if it's changing. Many times it's because you're coming into a previous excavation, and it may be an unmarked utility. It also may call for a different style of shoring."

## **WHAT'S UNDERNEATH**

"Before you open up a trench, nature is in balance. As soon as you cut into it, the earth wants to heal itself by caving in," explains David Dow, senior vice president with TrenchSafety and Supply, an Underground Safety Equipment company based in Memphis, Tennessee. "Except in stable rock – which is almost nonexistent – every trench is going to collapse at some point, sometimes quickly, sometimes not."

OSHA regs classify soils as **stable rock**, then **Type A, B and C**, in descending order of stability. "The best way to remember C is 'crap,'" Dow states bluntly. Complicating matters is the fact that what's underneath can be a mix of soil types. Which is the reason why no trench, no matter how routine to a contractor, is the same. The type of soil changes, depth changes and terrain changes. Weather – especially rain – complicates things further. You need to take all of this into account when choosing a trench protection system. (continued pg 8)



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**MOUNTING & DISMOUNTING EQUIPMENT**

Because jumping down off large equipment is a common practice for construction workers, it's no surprise that lower back, knee, ankle and neck injuries occur more frequently. Regardless of the type of equipment you work with, mounting and dismounting safely should always be on your mind.

**What Can You Do?**

To lessen your risk of injuries, follow these simple mounting and dismounting instructions for trucks and other types of tall equipment or machinery.

- ♦ When using a new piece of machinery, become familiar with proper mounting and dismounting procedures.
- ♦ When a person jumps from heights of more than one foot, the force that goes through the body is about 14 times the person's body weight. In other words, a 165 pound man who jumps out of construction equipment or any other high surface, is exerting 2,310 pounds of force on his body. This can cause injury to bones, tendons and cartilage. And if you're doing this multiple times every workday, the damage to the body can be extensive.

- ♦ When dismounting and mounting, maintain three-point contact. This means having contact with the construction equipment by either one foot and two hands or one hand and two feet. The smaller the triangle you form with your body the more stable you are.
- ♦ Always face the vehicle both when mounting and dismounting.
- ♦ Look at the surface below before stepping and make sure it is even to prevent ankle and knee injuries.
- ♦ Never mount or dismount moving equipment.
- ♦ Do not mount or dismount with anything, including tools, in your hands. Not only does it throw the body off balance, it also reduces your chance of recovering your balance if you do slip. Use drop rope to raise and lower supplies, tools and equipment instead.
- ♦ Handholds and footholds are on the equipment for a reason, use them.
- ♦ Wear appropriate clothing. Loose or torn clothing can get caught on equipment when you jump down. Wear proper footwear when slippery.

## REGISTER TO WIN A FREE TRIP TO THE 2019 PENNSYLVANIA LICA WINTER CONVENTION IN HARRISBURG, PA

*It's easy....just submit a one page story and a few pictures of how you started your business and the changes that have taken place over the years....*number of employees, types of work performed, how your inventory of machines has changed, your struggles and successes, etc. Submissions must be received by 12/31/18 to qualify for the

### **GRAND PRIZE THAT INCLUDES**

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  - Meals for the entire convention
  - Up to 2 Hotel Rooms (if needed)

**\*\*WINNERS MUST MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ATTEND AT LEAST 2 REGIONAL CLASSES/EVENTS IN 2019, IN ADDITION TO THE CONVENTION.**

Send your story by email or regular mail and please be sure to include pictures with details—the stories submitted will be shared in upcoming newsletters and on our new website.

Those that submit stories, but aren't chosen as the GRAND PRIZE WINNER, will receive a great gift at the 2019 Winter Convention, donated by one of our many awesome Associates. **You do have to be present to claim your prize and we'll HOLD a swap meet in case you'd rather have someone else's prize!!**

### REGISTRATION FORM FOR YOUR STORY SUBMISSION

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
COMPANY: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE SUBMITTED: \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ CONTACT #: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Please type or write your company story on a separate piece of paper and include a few pictures. If possible, include some pictures from when your first started your company and some from present day. All stories we receive will run in upcoming newsletters, and the Convention Committee will choose one winner to receive the above mentioned GRAND prize.** Don't be shy—share your story with your fellow members! Call Joanie with any questions-724-588-1954.

**All submissions need to be mailed into the Main Office at:**

**Pennsylvania LICA  
775 Mercer Road  
Greenville, PA 16125 or Email: [pennsylvanialica@gmail.com](mailto:pennsylvanialica@gmail.com)**

### YOU CHOOSE

“Protecting your workers from a cave-in is not a matter of which system is better or worse, but which one fits your situation the best,” says Mike Ross, national training coordinator, Efficiency Production. For example, many utility crossings occur in the first 5 feet of a trench. “Dealing with all the things around you is a huge driving force in what works best,” he says.

Contractors in a certain area may prefer systems based on tradition. “But it might be the absolute wrong system based on the job conditions,” Post says.

Trench protection systems are engineered by factoring in varying weights of soil, hydrostatic loads and the surcharge loads from items such as nearby traffic and equipment, according to Ross. In addition to protecting workers, these systems must give contractors enough room to do their job.

Job conditions also change, affecting trench protection systems. If ground water is present in a trench, for example, Post says it can literally more than double the amount of pressure placed on a trench protection system.



**Shoring is one of three basic methods contractors can use to make sure their workers are protected in a trench.**

### FROM SALES TO RENTAL

“Trench protection used to be a sales business, then rent-to-sale, and now it’s mostly rental,” says Wendell Wood, senior trainer, National Trench Safety, Houston, Texas.

“It was a small niche,” says Tom Hartman, senior vice president, strategic alliances, National Trench Safety. “Only in the largest cities would you have maybe one dedicated company. Now you have multiple competitors in multiple locations. Now everybody wants in.”

Market estimates now put the trench protection industry at between \$1.1 billion to \$1.5 billion in annual sales. The largest player in trench safety rentals is United Rentals, which bought NES Trench Safety in 2002. According to the firm’s 2017 annual report, rental revenues from the company’s combined trench, power and pump segments grew 27.5 percent between 2016 and 2017, to a total of \$988 million. (Note: Hurricane-related revenues on the power and pump side effect these results.)

As elsewhere in construction equipment, trench protection has consolidated, leading to a blending of who makes what and who distributes what.

“The lines have blurred between manufacturers and distributors,” Hartman says. “Both are looking at the opportunity to expand their equipment.”

The industry has also responded to compact construction equipment’s popularity by creating lighter shoring systems. “For smaller jobs, the industry is moving from using steel to using aluminum,” explains Joe Turner, director of engineering, National Trench Safety. Another change: several trench rental firms now offer in-house capabilities for engineered shoring services, required for trenches 20 feet and over.

And consulting capabilities have come to the forefront. “Consultation is a huge piece of what we do,” says Jeremy Neill, region product development manager, United Rentals Trench Safety. The company says its experts keep up with local, state and federal regulatory requirements, helping contractors stay compliant.

(Continued on page 9)

### KNOW WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT A SPECIFIC TRENCH

OSHA mandates that every company have a designated competent person to manage safety. When it comes to trenches, this person must be trained and know the OSHA standards, know how to identify soil, know the correct use of protective systems and be authorized to stop work when hazards arise.

"It's the responsibility of the competent person to make sure they know what is unique about a specific trench and that they have the right solution," Dow says.

Many entities offer competent-person training, including OSHA, trench protection manufacturers, rental companies and safety consultants. United Rentals, for example, has nine full-time trainers, and each of its 85 branch locations has trainers plus online training capabilities. "Workforce development is a hot button issue in construction, and people are being hired who just don't know what the OSHA standards are, because they're new to the industry," Neill says.

Ross estimates that in 2017 his company trained close to 1,500 students. "It comes down to the competent person and how well they identify hazards," Ross says. "If something changes on the jobsite, they fix it. It's a continual process, and they need to have a firm understanding about what it entails."

### PLAN, PLAN, PLAN

Trench protection comes into the strategy of how you bid a job, Serrambana says.

Also part of planning: walking the job to be bid, making a note of soil conditions and visible signs and utilities. "This is what we do; we're not caught off guard," he explains.

Experience also teaches that what's bid is not what's installed, says Roberts. "It may morph from a 4-foot hole and you hit water, and you might have to dig a much wider hole in order to keep it from caving in. Plan for it in the contract so you can cover yourself."

Some contractors may automatically default to classifying all soils as Type C, but that may be unnecessary. "It will exclude a lot of systems, and it will usually require the most expensive system," Hartman says. "They may be using a 10,000-pound trench box – and the resulting equipment needed to lift it – rather than a system that weighs much less." (Con't on pg 10)

## MEMBER NEWS- NEW WEBSITE



[www.PennsylvaniaIca.com](http://www.PennsylvaniaIca.com)

**IF YOU HAVEN'T VISITED IT YET, DO SO TODAY!**

We hope you'll find it very easy to navigate.

### A FEW THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- The box that reads "MY ACCOUNT" on top right is a log in for members only. You'll use your **Member ID (PA \_\_-\_\_)** you received when you became a member that starts with (PA—then last 2 digits of the year you joined or when member numbers were first assigned from the National office--then 4 digits) I sent everyone their ID number with the directory mailing this summer, but I keep them on file in the office so I can provide it to you again if needed.
- What the LOG IN provides you as a member, is access to the membership directory and more detailed information about Benefits and our Associates, Scholarship Info, Association By-Laws, and **PRINTABLE TOOL BOX TALKS** that non-members won't have access to.
- When you first visit the site and log into your account, you'll be asked to set up a password for future access, so please notate and save your login info.



**It's critical to know the type of soil on your job. This will be key in determining how best to protect your workers in the trench.**

### **A FAIL PROOF SYSTEM**

“Used properly, there are no examples of a trench protection system failing,” Dow says, but there are plenty of examples of failure due to improper use, from missing components to over-stressed protection systems.

“If you have a trench box that’s not large enough for your excavation, or strong enough, or installed improperly, then you don’t have a trench box,” Post says.

Trench protection systems use manufacturers’ tabulated data, which outline, among other things, the capacity of structural elements and depth ratings. This “tab data,” as it’s referred to, appears on a plate or sticker attached to the system. It can also be given to the jobsite competent person in paper form or be accessible via phone app. Whatever form, the tab data for each system must be on the jobsite and accessible.

The contractor’s competent person is responsible for matching the soil with the type of protection used. Soil changes in an excavation, but the tab data on a trench protection system – for example, an allowable depth rating of 10 feet in Type C soil – does not.

The bottom line, experts say, is that operating safely is critical to your company’s future. **“When you’re protecting your people, you’re also protecting your company and your reputation,”** Wood says.

Serrambana has worked in the trenches since he was a teenager. “When I look back at what I saw then, the industry as a whole has improved by leaps and bounds in protecting workers,” he says, adding: **“If another \$3,000 in shoring rental on a multimillion dollar job will make or break your job, you really shouldn’t be on that job.”**

### **Top Tips from Contractors**

- ♦ **Include Trench protection in your bid.**
- ♦ **Have an emergency plan and go over it at the start of every job. Make sure you have the local fire department’s direct number. “With 911, you may be talking to a dispatch center that’s 100 miles away,” first responder and contractor Alex Robert says.**
- ♦ **OSHA inspectors are not the enemy. Take a proactive approach and learn from their critiques.**
- ♦ **Get trained. Classes in trench safety are available from a variety of sources.**
- ♦ **In addition to protecting workers, trench protection systems need to give crews enough room to do their job.**



## What's Up with Medical Marijuana & DOT Laws?

There are 23 states (plus Washington D.C.) in the union that have legislation legalizing the use of medical marijuana with strict guidelines and regulations: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, D.C., Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington.

However, officials at the DOT released a statement in 2008, emphasizing that existing Department of Justice guidelines do not have any bearing on the existing DOT drug testing program. The statement further emphasized that marijuana use, including authorized medical possession, will not be tolerated among safety-sensitive transportation employees.

Therefore, a Medical Review Officer (MRO) will not consider a drug/controlled substance test as negative even if a qualified physician verifies the employee in question is authorized to use marijuana medically.

In fact, the DOT is sticking by the provision in its drug and alcohol testing policy which states MROs may not verify that a test is negative based on physician information that an employee is authorized to use a drug listed in Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act.

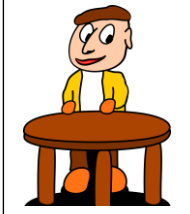
Whether or not the substance's use is legal under special conditions, in certain states, does not affect the fact that driving under the influence is dangerous. The DOT's mission is to make the public transportation system as safe as possible, and making exceptions to the Controlled Substances Act does not fall under this goal.

**Be a driver in the know - once you take the test, and the result is positive, there is no turning back.** The DOT has made its position on controlled substance use clear, so remember the laws for commercial motor vehicle drivers even if you reside in one of the 23 states (plus D.C.) where medical marijuana use is legal. Think before you risk your job and your career!



## HOW MUCH ARE YOU LEAVING ON THE TABLE???

Modified from article  
by Diane Curtis/Wisconsin ED



Many of our current members were originally attracted to PALICA by the excellent business and liability insurance program offered by LICA in partnership with United Fire Group (UFG). An excellent program, at good rates, with the incentive of potential dividends was enough to convince you to give us a try.

But if that is all you know about PALICA, you are missing some real opportunities. LICA is a 77 year old trade association created to help owners of small to medium sized contracting businesses operate more safely, with best business practices through educational and good networking opportunities. That's why we look for good partners like UFG!

Through PALICA and National LICA, we help members harness their collective buying power. This collective buying power enables us to offer our members a number of benefit programs so they can operate their businesses more efficiently and more economically.

From health insurance, to equipment discounts, medical transport plans to company identifying, clothing, legal help to payroll services, we can help you find quality products at great prices. Many of these benefits come to you just by virtue of being a member – the LICA Safety Manual, a comparable \$3,000 value that enables you to set up and administer a company safety program which meets OSHA requirements. Safety being our most important consideration, all members receive this program upon becoming a member.

Other benefits such as Petrocon, Healthy LifeStyles Health Insurance and business succession programs require some initiative on your part, and we are glad to help you with that. Speaking of Petrocon, how many of your families shop at member-buyers' clubs, such as Sam's Club or Costco? Petrocon is a buyers' club for things you need every day for your business – such as oil, lubricants, tires, replacement parts, etc. Unlike local supplies who might offer you discounts on retail prices, Petrocon offers you discounts on wholesale prices. You pay what the big boys pay.

The complete list of contractor benefits is listed on our website: [www.pennsylvanialica.com](http://www.pennsylvanialica.com) as well as in the LICA Contractor Magazine you receive quarterly. Contact information for these benefits is listed under the "members only" portion of the site, or give Joanie a call at our chapters office (724-588-1954) and she'll be glad to help you find the answers!

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*(See their writeup in the winter newsletter and meet them at the PA Convention!)*

# Used equipment inspection checklist: This is no time to gamble!

A copyright credit to Equipment World, a publication of Randall-Reilly.

**I**t doesn't take long to evaluate a used car or truck but inspecting a piece of used equipment – whether it's a beater or nearly new – requires several hours to a half a day. Anything you miss and have to repair or replace later will cost thousands if not tens of thousands of dollars.

So make a list. Be thorough. Take your time and carry a clipboard. After you've assessed the deficiencies, figure out each problem and what it would cost to fix, and adjust your bid accordingly.

While the general inspection points won't apply to every machine – for instance, undercarriage inspection points on a wheeled machine – this will give you a good overview of what's critical. Many operational checks will require two people: one to operate the machine and the other to observe how it performs. We also outline what's key to examine in each of the major machine types.

Also keep in mind that you can hire professionals to do this for you. Even if that seems expensive, it likely will save you money in the long run. Here's what to look for:

## VISUAL INSPECTION



Cylinders should be free of nicks or dings. Oil on the chrome may indicate a reseal is needed.

Check metal fuel and oil lines to make sure they're not bent or kinked and to ensure connection points are tight. Pull the air filter and note its condition. Inspect radiators for bent or damaged fins. Radiators should be free of debris, and connection points leak – or drip – free.

Note any paint discoloration or bubbling on the engine cowlings or covers. This may indicate an overheating problem.

Look for leaks around gaskets, hydraulic pump, hoses and fittings.

## Frame, boom stick

Look for hairline cracks in the metal. Ensure the welds are all solid and intact. Bushings should be intact and grease present. Inspect the hoses and fittings for leaks, kinks, wear or damage.

Keep in mind if the machine has been used to run a hammer that has likely put a great deal of stress on the boom and stick and their linkages.

## ROPS/FOPS



Look for wear on buckets and teeth. Reversible cutting edges are a plus.

Look for cracks, bent or damaged metal. Note any cracks or damage to windshield. Inspect door seals to make sure they're crack- or damage-free and airtight.

Grab handles, access ladders and diamond plate/skid resistant surfaces should be intact and solidly mounted.

## Hydraulic cylinders

Look for leaks, excessive oil coming past the cylinder wiper or pitting/scarring on the cylinder chrome. A film of dirt or dust may indicate the wiper needs replacing.

## Latches and locks

These are small items but can be a nuisance and something that may need to be repaired. Test each one including cab, battery box, fuel fill, engine hood or cowling, DEF access, cooling panel access.



Tires are expensive. Make sure you know your replacement costs.

## Buckets and blades

Look for excessive or uneven wear or damage on bucket teeth and cutting edges. Check supporting linkages and cylinders for wear or damage. Check to see if cutting edges are reversible or both edges are worn down.

Check that the bucket and/or blade sits level on the ground.

## Tires

Check tread depth and inspect each tire for cuts and gashes. Measure air pressure. Inspect the sidewalls for cuts and bulges, which may indicate damage to the liner or steel belt and imminent failure. Tires should be matched and worn evenly. If the machine has been sitting for a while, look for dry rot, which will show up as faded color, brittleness and/or small cracks in the tread or sidewalls.

## Linkages

Examine the machine for wear on all the pins and bushings throughout the linkage on the boom. Everything that has a grease zerk should have grease on it.



Bearings and bushings should have grease on them. While operating, look for any signs of flex or play.

## Steel undercarriage

Look for wear on the sprockets, rollers and track pads. "Sharp teeth" on the sprocket tell you it's near the end of its useful life.

Look at the rail pins and bushings. As the pins and bushings wear internally, each track segment lengthens and becomes looser. To take up the slack, the front idler is moved forward in a bracket on the rails between the idler and the rear drive sprocket. There will come a point, however, when no further adjustments can be made. Some owners take a link out. While this makes the track look tighter, it also creates a tremendous amount of internal wear.

The best way to see if an undercarriage is worn out is to measure it using a track measuring group, which costs about \$250 and is available from most dealers. With this you can measure the grouser height, rails, links and carrier roller and guide roller tread diameter and bushings.

## Rubber tracks



Undercarriage measurement is a complex procedure. Consider getting a kit from an equipment dealer.

Inspect rubber tracks for worn track pads, cuts or gouges. Look for wear or steel showing through on drive links. Check track for proper tension, which indicates good maintenance.

## Engine

Turn the machine on and allow it to reach operating temperature while listening for any loud or unusual noises from the engine and/or cooling system, knocking or rough idle. Some exhaust smoke at startup is normal, but exhaust should clear quickly. White smoke indicates incomplete fuel burn and possibly leaky or malfunctioning injectors or restricted air intake. Black or blue smoke indicates that oil is getting by the cylinder rings or low compression.

## Hydraulic cycles



Access ladders should be secure and in good working order.

Using a stopwatch, time how long it takes to fully retract the arm cylinder and fully extend the bucket cylinder, then raise and lower the boom, timing each up and down motion. To test the arm cylinder, with the bucket cylinder fully extended, time how long it takes to move the arm from the full-out position to the full-in position.

Then time how long it takes to return to the full arm-out position again. Compare your times with manufacturer published times.

To test the track running speed, tie a ribbon on one of the track shoes on the side being tested, jack up the side where the track is being tested, then time how long it takes to do three track rotations at maximum speed. Apply the test to both tracks, forward and reverse. Also tram the machine to make sure it travels in a straight line – if it veers one way or the other, you could have a weak pump.

Check for drifting – also called creeping – by raising the boom with a full load in the bucket, then turning the machine off. Wipe the oil off the boom cylinder rod and mark the measuring start point. After five minutes, measure again to see how much it has drifted down. To test the arm cylinder, with the bucket cylinder fully extended, time how long it takes to move the arm from the full-out position to the full-in position.

## Emissions controls

With the engine running, make sure there are no warning lights on the dash indicating problems with the emissions controls, such as a DPF needing regeneration or an SCR system that is lacking in DEF fluid. If the previous owner is available, inquire about DPF maintenance schedules.

## Skid steers

Look for evidence of over-the-tire tracks, which may cause wear spots on tires.



Under load, raise bucket to gauge how well it holds its position without drifting.

Driveline wear can be different with different skid steer brands. Check the chains. Loose is not a problem, but if you hear clatter, it could mean it has been loose for a while and may have damaged the sprockets. That could require an expensive repair.

## Wheel loaders

The king pin/articulation joint carries all the load on a wheel loader and should be tight and flex free. Make sure all the grease fittings are intact and the top and bottom pins are vertically aligned. When you're operating the bucket, have your inspection partner observe the top and bottom pins of the center pivot and note if there's excessive up and down movement, which could indicate wear.

## Excavators

If you can see any movement in a swing bearing, it's probably too much. Beyond the visual inspection, use a magnetic dial indicator to take a measurement at four quarter-turn positions; an average of these four measurements will tell you what shape the machine's swing bearing is in. Without this measurement, you're guessing at the amount of wear in the swing bearing and this is a costly repair item. Inspect final drives for leaks.

## Dozers

If the dozer has a power-angle-tilt (PAT) blade, make sure it has full movement and the control cylinders are in good shape. Inspect final drives for leaks.

**USE THE ARTICLE IN THIS NEWSLETTER AND THE CHECKLIST BELOW WHEN SHOPPING FOR USED EQUIPMENT – IT MAY SAVE YOU BIG MONEY!**

**CHECKLIST:**

Feel free to reprint this, take it with you on inspections and record your observations:

| VISUAL INSPECTION               |           |      |      |                        |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------|------|------------------------|
| Item                            | Excellent | Good | Poor | Cost to repair/replace |
| Engine                          |           |      |      |                        |
| Frame                           |           |      |      |                        |
| Boom                            |           |      |      |                        |
| Stick                           |           |      |      |                        |
| ROPS/FOPS                       |           |      |      |                        |
| Hyd. Cylinders                  |           |      |      |                        |
| Latches/locks                   |           |      |      |                        |
| Bucket/blade                    |           |      |      |                        |
| Tires                           |           |      |      |                        |
| Rubber track                    |           |      |      |                        |
| Linkages                        |           |      |      |                        |
| Undercarriage                   |           |      |      |                        |
| Bucket, blade                   |           |      |      |                        |
| work tool                       |           |      |      |                        |
| Final drives                    |           |      |      |                        |
| OPERATIONAL INSPECTION          |           |      |      |                        |
| Item                            | Excellent | Good | Poor | Cost to repair/replace |
| Engine                          |           |      |      |                        |
| Hyd. Cycles                     |           |      |      |                        |
| Track speed                     |           |      |      |                        |
| Boom drift                      |           |      |      |                        |
| Bushing movement                |           |      |      |                        |
| Leaks, drips                    |           |      |      |                        |
| MACHINE SPECIFIC                |           |      |      |                        |
| Item                            | Excellent | Good | Poor | Cost to repair/replace |
| Skid steer chain case           |           |      |      |                        |
| Skid steer driveline            |           |      |      |                        |
| Wheel loader articulation joint |           |      |      |                        |
| Excavator swing bearing         |           |      |      |                        |
| Dozer PAT blade                 |           |      |      |                        |

**In a tight spot**--A backhoe's swing radius is a dangerous spot to be in.....



**"The accident":** A contractor was operating a backhoe close to a concrete wall. Another worker approached the backhoe on the operator's blind side and walked between the wall and the swinging structure of the backhoe. The operator failed to see the other worker, and the victim was crushed between the machine and the wall. The victim died as a result of his injuries. The bottom line: **A post-accident investigation determined the contractor failed to train employees in safe work practices on the hazards of construction machinery. The company was also issued a citation for failing to erect barricades to prevent entry into the machine's swing radius. Remember the rules:** Whether you're a veteran operator or a novice, remembering the safe work practices you've been trained in will keep you and your fellow workers out of harm's way.

**If you're an operator:**

- Don't start your machine until you know everyone else is away from your work area
- Periodically sound your horn to remind other workers of your presence
- Always look around before you back up, hook up or swing an attachment to ensure everyone is in the clear.

**If you're on the ground:**

- Stay alert and aware of your surroundings at all times
- Never walk into a machine's swing radius while it is in operation
- Recognize the danger of passing between a machine and a solid object on the jobsite.

**Common sense tips:**

**Visibility** –Check all windows and mirrors prior to backhoe operation, and clean any dirt or debris from them. Look around the cab and make sure nothing in the cab will obstruct your vision.

**Communication** – If your work area includes solid objects, other machines or structures that obstruct your view, enlist a spotter to help you maintain a safe work environment. The spotter will alert you to any dangers outside of your field of vision, and instruct you to stop machine operation if a person enters your machine's swing radius.



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