

Service

Safety

Quality

SEPTEMBER, 2009

# the **Block**

C O N N E C T I O N

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*“Our competitive edge as a contractor is directly dependent on the success of our safety program.”*

## PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

- JACK BLOCK

I was recently reviewing various industry news releases and came across an article written by John Grau. He is the Executive Vice President of the National Electrical Contractors Association in Washington D.C. According to Mr. Grau, OSHA is being viewed by the present administration as being in bed with employers and one of their goals is to stop this cozy relationship and turn it back to an adversarial role. I have to speak personally and share with you my feelings about such a shift. This anti-business sentiment of making employers the “bad guys” when it comes to employee safety couldn’t be further from the truth. Our company spends a great deal of time, effort and money on our safety program and it pays off. We do this because I don’t want to see anyone hurt. Injuries are an extreme hardship on your families and the company.

Our competitive edge as a contractor is directly dependent on the success of our safety programs. Workers compensation insurance is the biggest insurance dollar we spend. It is part of our labor rate that we charge our customers. If our safety record is poor the cost increase passes through to our labor rates. This makes the company less competitive. Plants, customers and general contractors are demanding safe and conscientious contractors. They won’t even consider a contractor with less than a stellar safety record and an active safety program.

Why do we need a hostile OSHA? Why do we need a big government looking at us to make sure that a foreman on the job has his paperwork packet in place? Better performance is developed through a positive relationship, not a negative one. Why take an effective partnership (the one between OSHA and contractors) and make it hostile? I don’t get it. OSHA started out in a hostile mode and rightfully so. It evolved into a productive agency that made the work place a lot safer in a positive environment. I just can’t agree with the anti-business sentiment that is being fostered. We are a small business that wants to do the right thing. We care about our people, we care about this industry, and we are proud of our accomplishments.

I want a safe working environment for everyone. This I pledge to you. I will do my best to make sure everyone receives the training and has the proper tooling to work as safely as possible. I want to eliminate accidents on our sites. That is the meat of the issue. Government is concerned with paperwork and theory and negative enforcement. I look at that as the bun. I would rather eat the meat than deal with the bun. I believe our programs are effective because our people want them to be, not because somebody is standing over us ready to put us out of business because our paperwork isn’t perfect. If you see an improvement we can make please let me know.

## BACK TO SCHOOL

- MIKE DEGER

It's back to school time for the kid's. It's also a great time to think about upgrading and improving your skills. Journeyman night school starts in September. Renewable energy is a hot topic these days. Photo Voltiac installations require new skills and a certification. With the new Illinois incentives we can expect a large increase in this type of work.

The Chicagoland Construction Safety Council offers a plethora of safety related courses. The two most important today are the OSHA 10-Hour and 30-Hour courses. All the large general contractors are requiring supervision to have the 30-Hour and some are requiring all workers to have the 10-Hour.

This is a great time to take these courses.

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## HEALTH INSURANCE

- MIKE DEGER

There is much talk about changes to how we pay for healthcare and insurance in DC and the media. One of the major benefits of working in the unionized construction industry is employer provided health insurance. This is an important but very expensive benefit. Here are the facts about healthcare costs at Block Electric:

	<u>134</u>	<u>176</u>	<u>701</u>	<u>Office</u>
Hourly Cost	\$ 11.33	\$ 10.42	\$ 8.65	\$ 6.70
Weekly Cost	\$ 453.20	\$ 416.80	\$ 346.00	\$ 270.00
Annual Cost	\$ 22,660.00	\$ 20,840.00	\$ 17,300.00	\$ 14,040.00

Except for minor differences all have the same coverage.

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## CUSTOMER DELIGHT

*An email sent to Mike Deger from Sylvia Novick, Director of Finance and Administration for The Society of Thoracic Surgeons on the Conference Room project.*

Thank you so much for squeezing us in with so little notice. We were in desperate need to add a second outlet into an existing wall and to hardwire a table for an important meeting. I really appreciate it.

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## CUSTOMER DELIGHT

*An email sent to George Masters, Mike Haines and Dave Scott from Drew Walters, Project Manager, Bulley & Andrews, LLC on the Rush 8N J R Bowman project.*

I just wanted to thank you for all the help with the Advent items. I appreciate the help and hard work in such a short, time crunched time-frame. Everything went well with IPDH. Good work.

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## CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Michael Block who completed the Bigfoot Triathlon in Lake Geneva, WI on June 28th, 2009 and finished with a time of 1:35:02. He trained two months for the race that was a .75K Swim , 20K Bike, and 5K Run.

Michael enjoyed the experience and he is signed up for the Chicago Triathlon which takes place on August 30, 2009. Good Luck Michael!



# ARE YOU SURE THAT MACHINERY IS SAFE TO WORK ON?

- DREW BOYCE

Lock Out/Tag Out procedures apply to operations where a worker is required to adjust, service, repair or clean machinery or equipment in such a method where the unexpected startup, energization, or release of stored energy could cause injury. Even though a piece of equipment may be "turned off" or "powered down," many times energy remains stored in the machine which could seriously injure or kill if it were released. Lock Out/Tag Out (LOTO) procedures are designed to protect you from the unexpected. A LOTO procedure should be in place for all types of energy sources including: mechanical, electrical, hydraulic, pneumatic, chemical and thermal energy. Here are the minimum precautions you should take:

- Equipment and machinery must be turned off and locked out before any servicing, adjusting or repair operations begin.
- If the main power sources are physically capable of being locked, they must be locked out at the "energy isolating device" to ensure that the machine cannot accidentally start. This means the main circuit conductors must be disconnected. (The term "energy isolating device" does not imply push buttons, selector switches or other control circuit devices.)
- Stored energy such as steam, electrical, hydraulic, gas, water, air or any source capable of conveying potentially hazardous energy must be released. Sources feeding the equipment or machinery being serviced must be blocked off and/or blinded. (This can include grounding capacitors, relieving tension on springs, elevating and blocking up machine parts, restraining flywheels or blinding and bleeding feed lines.)
- Lines that have been bled off and/or disconnected must be tagged to let everyone know who is performing the work—The tag should identify the person who locked the system out, the company or department, the date and time the equipment was disconnected and the reason for disconnecting it. This applies to equipment, machines or pipeline systems.
- If the equipment cannot be locked out to isolate the energy, a tag must be installed in place of a lock. If a Tag Out procedure is used, the procedure must provide an equivalent level of safety to that achieved by a Lock Out procedure. The Tag Out policy must be communicated to all employees authorized to perform LOTO operations. (A commonly overlooked but effective safeguard, is communicating lockout procedures to new employees, and communicating the company's LOTO procedures to the client whose facility we are working in.)
- Prior to servicing, the equipment or machine must be tested to ensure that it has been adequately isolated. This means actually attempting to start the machine or equipment by normal operating methods to prove it cannot start. This procedure should require testing all systems that are capable of conveying any form of energy to the area where operations will be conducted.
- After service is completed, all guards and safety devices that have been removed must be replaced, making sure that the operation controls are in neutral. Individuals should remove only their own individual lock or tag from isolated energy sources. No energy source should be reconnected until all employee tags or locks have been removed, all employees are accounted for, and the area is inspected to verify everyone is clear.
- Once all employees have been accounted for, restore all power and feed sources and test the equipment that was being serviced. Finally, inform all concerned parties (internal and external) that the work has been completed.

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*A thank you note from Jorianne Maritato, a recipient of the Block Electric 2009-2010 Scholarship Awards*

I was honored to hear that I had been selected to receive the Block Electric Scholarship. As a recipient of the scholarship I feel fortunate to have been selected. I just wanted to take time to say thank you for your willingness to contribute to my future education, I will be attending Elmhurst College and I plan on majoring in education.

Block Electric Company is an  
Equal Opportunity Employer

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Who are we celebrating  
on Labor Day?

### 149.1 million

Number of people age  
16 or older in the na-  
tion's labor force.

Among the nation's  
workers are 80.0 million  
men and 69.1 million  
women. These men and  
women represent 66  
percent of the civilian  
adult population.

## BIRTHDAYS

Nicholas	Dickson	09/02
Doug	Henline	09/03
Tim	O'Keefe	09/07
Kara	Maude	09/16
Dan	Stieber	09/17
Frazer	Sydnor	09/18
Jason	Carline	09/20
Dale	McClenney	09/23
Mike	Deger	09/24
Larry	McCormick	09/26



## NEW EMPLOYEES

Welcome to the new kids on the Block team.

Michael Moriarty

## SMART TIPS FOR CONSERVING YOUR CASH

### Follow these smart tips for conserving your cash

Saving money is smart in good times and bad. With a little effort and planning, you can cut your personal costs by following some of these handy hints:

- **Unplug appliances.** Don't just turn your TV off—unplug it when you're not watching anything. Even switched off, most appliances such as TVs and computers consume some electricity. Pulling the plug saves on money and energy-related resources.
- **Drive less.** Cutting your car use in half can save you more than \$1,000 a year. Carpool, or use public transportation, to get to and from work. You'll save on gas, maintenance, and insurance.
- **Eat at home.** The average person spends more than \$2,200 a year eating at restaurants or fast-food establishments. Cook your own meals, and take your lunch to work instead of buying food every day.
- **Take advantage of customer reward programs.** Discount cards that save you a few dollars here and there can add up to major savings over time. For your convenience, set up an alternative e-mail account at Gmail or Yahoo and use it when you sign up for programs. You'll be better able to manage the promotional e-mails you receive from joining companies' mailing lists.
- **Wait before buying.** Implement a 24-hour rule before buying anything (and a 30-day rule for major purchases). Don't buy anything on impulse: Wait the required amount of time, and then decide how much you really need or want the item. You may be surprised by what you can live without.

## POSITIVE ACTIVITIES PROMOTE POSITIVE THINKING

Positive thinking isn't all mental. Here are a few simple physical activities you can do to improve your outlook:

- **Keep your back straight.** Good posture makes you appear stronger and more confident.
- **Smile.** You'll look more attractive, and the mere act of smiling can often lift a person's mood and spirits.
- **Exercise.** You'll relieve physical stress, release endorphins, and enjoy the positive effects of being in shape.