

On the

Road



2026 Issue 1

UAC '26
Wrap Up

Pre-Season:
Get Your Head in the Game



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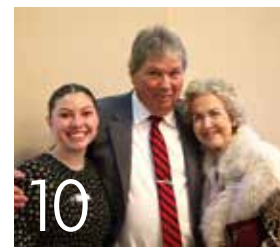
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Each year, we dedicate the first issue of *On the Road* to covering not only the Utah Asphalt Conference, but also the outstanding projects, dedicated people, and exciting changes that shape our industry. I think everyone who attended this year's annual dinner and conference would agree — it was time well spent. We left with a renewed sense of purpose and a deeper appreciation for the work we do and its importance.

We've all heard the phrase that life is a journey, not a destination. However, we understand that every journey — no matter how great — requires a solid foundation. That's what we provide. Whether it's a highway connecting families, an airport runway launching new adventures, or a local road bringing someone home, your work is the literal ground beneath the feet of progress.

Over the course of the two-day conference, industry leaders shared valuable knowledge and best practices, reinforcing a clear message: our industry is evolving.

We are navigating a shift toward sustainability, making recycled materials the standard for a greener future. We are embracing smart technology, using digital sensors and intelligent compaction to ensure the roads we build today last for decades, not just years.



Rick Johnson,
Executive Director, UAPA

As we all know, more people are leaving the construction industry than entering it. We are addressing the challenges of a changing workforce, recognizing that leading with purpose and investing in our people is essential to moving forward.

Looking back, we should feel proud of what we've accomplished through the growth and development of our association over the past year — progress that was evident at the conference. For a state the size of Utah, our event rivals any asphalt conference in the country.

Once again, attendance, vendor participation, and exhibition space exceeded previous years, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

The Planning Committee did an exceptional job bringing together both national and local expertise, offering valuable insights into the key developments, trends, practices, and technologies shaping our industry. Thank you for your efforts.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *On the Road*.

FHWA and UDOT bring the Mobile Asphalt Technology Center (MATC) to Utah in June. Check the UAPA website (utahasphalt.org) for places and dates. I hope to see you there!



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Jonas Staker, *Staker Parson Materials & Construction, UAPA 2026 President*

The Utah Asphalt Pavement Association annual dinner serves as the kickoff to our annual conference each year, bringing together representation from every age group and level of experience across the industry. Families attend alongside industry professionals, creating an atmosphere that reflects the strong community within Utah's asphalt industry. High school and college scholarship recipients join us as they begin their career journeys, while many other attendees are in the midst of their own asphalt careers, serving in both the private and public sectors.

Over the evening, we recognized the 2026 Industry Award winners, which included Wayne Nielson, our 2026 UAPA Hall of Fame inductee, and his family. Wayne has left a lasting legacy to our industry in so many ways.

Carlos Braceras, our UDOT Executive Director, attended as well, and we are all so grateful for his support of our association and the positive relationship we have with him and UDOT.

Over the past year, I have had the privilege of collaborating with my colleagues through the many UAPA committees. We have had a lot happening at UAPA, much of it driven by the leadership of our Executive Director, Rick Johnson, and his small but very capable staff. What they have accomplished this year is truly amazing.

In total, we have 17 UAPA committees that cover the industry from A to Z, including safety, training, innovation, workforce development, operations,

and leadership. To give this some scope, we have 223 UAPA member volunteers give their time beyond their regular jobs to serve this association in a committee role.

Here is another impressive number: 241. That is how many people have attended our Asphalt Inspection courses since January 1. These are individuals learning about our industry and building their skills. I recently attended one of these courses, and our presenters did an outstanding job. They were engaging, provided such valuable content and had just enough relatable stories to make it fun. Thank you to Cory Bekkmellon, Dan McDaniel, Zac Rasmussen, and Skyler Mounteer, along with all our volunteer instructors.

Over the past 12 months, our Workforce Development initiative has gained real momentum. This committee works closely with schools and state partners, and their energy is contagious. Workforce Development is UAPA's response to the 7:1 ratio — seven people leaving the industry for every one person entering. That is not acceptable for our industry, especially here in Utah, where we are growing as much as we are.

As an association, we are laser-focused on attracting people who value hard work, teamwork, and pride in building something with their own hands.

UAPA's mission is to be the unified voice of the asphalt industry and promote quality pavements in Utah. Based on our partnerships, programs, and people, I am proud to say we are achieving that mission.



UAPA's Annual Dinner



2026 Hall of Fame Inductee Wayne Nielson, Nielson Construction

Wayne Nielson has been the driving force behind Nielson Construction for most of his adult life, leading the family-owned company with integrity, dedication, and a strong commitment to people. In February at UAC '26, his lifelong contributions were recognized with his induction into the UAPA Hall of Fame.

Born in Price, Utah, and raised in Huntington, Wayne grew up working alongside his father, John C. Nielson, who founded the company with determination and a \$400 Army-surplus bulldozer after World War II. From an early age, Wayne developed a strong work ethic and a deep appreciation for humility, kindness, and gratitude — values that continue to guide his leadership.

After graduating from Emery High School, Wayne joined the company and eventually took over its leadership. Under his direction, Nielson Construction grew from a small excavation business into a diversified company employing nearly 400 people and serving as the largest locally owned employer in Carbon and Emery counties.

Wayne emphasized growth and diversification, expanding the company's services to include road construction, asphalt production, oil and gas services, trucking, concrete, excavation, crane services, and more. Despite its growth, he remained hands-on, leading by example and staying closely involved in daily operations.

In 2011, the company experienced a tragic loss when two employees were killed in separate incidents caused by impaired drivers in a construction zone. The response from employees — who supported the victims' families — left a lasting impact on Wayne and reinforced his commitment to safety and compassion in the workplace.

Family has always been central to Wayne's life. He and his wife, Teresa, high school sweethearts, will celebrate 50 years of marriage this July. Together, they raised four children and have 14 grandchildren.

Humbled by the recognition, Wayne credits his success to God, his family, and the people he has worked alongside. His guiding principle remains simple: God first, family second, and work third.

Wayne Nielson's legacy is defined not only by business success but by the lives he has touched, the communities he has strengthened, and the values he has passed on.



Friend of the Industry — Government Scott Nussbaum

For several years, Scott has been one of UAPA's key contacts at UDOT, playing an important leadership role in our quarterly UDOT-UAPA meetings.



He consistently approaches the relationship between government and industry with a collaborative mindset, recognizing that when the industry succeeds, UDOT succeeds — and when the industry faces challenges, UDOT does as well.

His fairness, steady professionalism, and commitment to partnership have strengthened the relationship between UDOT and our industry in meaningful ways that benefit communities across the state. Scott's leadership is so highly regarded that he was unanimously nominated by the UDOT Steering Committee for this recognition — a testament to the trust he has earned across both the public and private sectors.

Friend of the Industry — Education Saige Bowmen

Saige has been an exceptional partner to UAPA. She worked closely with us to develop a new Civil Construction curriculum, resulting in two pilot courses now being taught within the Jordan School District. Once finalized, this curriculum will be available statewide, introducing high school students to careers in horizontal construction — including asphalt — and creating a clear pathway into our industry.



Through Saige's leadership, students across Utah are gaining valuable exposure to the opportunities our industry provides. Her commitment to developing Utah's future workforce is evident in all she does. We are deeply grateful for her partnership and are honored to recognize her as the recipient of the Friend of the Industry — Education Award.

Friend of the Industry — Engineering Lyndon Friant

Lyndon serves as Director of Construction Engineering at Jones & DeMille Engineering and has dedicated his career to supporting asphalt paving and transportation infrastructure projects across Utah. A graduate of Utah State University, he is both a registered Professional Engineer and Professional Land Surveyor.



He spent 13 years with UDOT as a field and resident engineer, helping deliver major paving and infrastructure projects statewide. Since 2011, he has continued this work in the consulting sector, partnering with UDOT and local agencies to provide practical, long-term solutions — particularly for rural communities.

Lyndon strengthens our industry not only through his technical expertise but also through his integrity and character. We are grateful for his dedication and the lasting impact he continues to make across Utah.

UAPA Industry Leader of the Year Daniel McDaniel

Dan began his construction career in 1986, building his expertise through hands-on experience while earning multiple ACI and ICC certifications and developing a strong background in QA/QC. Since joining Geneva Rock in 2012, he has advanced to his current role as Construction and Quality Control Manager, where he oversees asphalt and aggregate production.



He has also served as UAPA Technical Committee Chair for the past six years, working closely with contractors, UDOT, and APWA to strengthen collaboration and improve quality across the industry.

Over the past 18 months in particular, Dan has gone above and beyond in his support of UAPA. Most notably, he played a key role in developing UDOT's Asphalt Inspection course, which has already trained more than 241 individuals this year. UAPA is stronger today because of his leadership.

Asphalt Pavement Award Winners



Each year, at the annual dinner, UAPA has the opportunity to celebrate excellence in infrastructure and the dedication required to build lasting, quality pavement projects.

The recognition of these projects goes above and beyond standard specifications, setting a new benchmark for quality, durability, and safety.

UAPA thanks all those who submitted projects for consideration, the judges who had the difficult job of narrowing down the winners, and, of course, the hundreds of dedicated crew members who worked tirelessly to achieve the outstanding results demonstrated in every project nominated, not just those that won this year.

Large City Project of the Year Grantsville City — Matthews Lane



Matthews Lane is a full roadway and utility reconstruction project that demonstrates how well-executed asphalt can drive economic growth, improve safety, and deliver lasting public value. This project deserves recognition because it does more than move traffic; it shapes the future of an entire community.

The Matthews Lane Project was approved by the Grantsville City Council in 2024. Construction began on June 2, 2025, and was substantially completed in December 2025. This strategically planned investment involved the complete reconstruction of the roadway, including underground utility improvements, to ensure the corridor could support long-term development and increased demand. Safety was a top priority throughout all the phases of construction, and the project had zero reported injuries. Rebuilding the roadway from the ground up, the city positioned this corridor for sustainable growth while proactively addressing future infrastructure needs.

The reconstructed roadway directly serves 17.79 acres of designated commercial land, with significant surrounding acreage planned for future development. Since project approval, the corridor has already attracted major commercial investment, including a grocery store, Ace Hardware, and Beans & Brews. By pairing full roadway and utility reconstruction with long-term land-use planning, the project transformed underutilized land into a functional, accessible, and attractive commercial corridor.

This roadway launched a catalyst for private investment, job creation, and long-term community vitality.

Large Project of the Year

Burdick Materials & UDOT — US-191 Realignment Near Simplot



The US-191 Realignment Near Simplot Project delivered a safer and more efficient transportation corridor through northeastern Utah while showcasing successful collaboration between public agencies, private industry, and local stakeholders.

For decades, the steep and winding switchbacks north of Vernal created safety and mobility challenges for travelers. The project transformed the 2.6-mile corridor

into a modern highway designed to improve safety, reliability, and efficiency.

Through a partnership between the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) and the J.R. Simplot Company, a mutually beneficial solution was developed. Simplot sought access to phosphate ore beneath the existing highway and had the equipment and workforce to move large volumes of earth, while UDOT aimed to improve public safety along US-191. Together, the partners completed the project while saving taxpayers an estimated \$40 million.

The new alignment eliminates dangerous hairpin turns and steep grades, improving travel for residents and visitors throughout the region. Communities

including Vernal and Dutch John now benefit from safer access to jobs, healthcare, education, and recreation.

The project was also completed with a strong commitment to safety, resulting in zero reported safety incidents through proactive planning, daily risk assessments, and hazard mitigation.

Pavement Preservation Project of the Year

Intermountain Slurry Seal — UDOT I-15, Arizona State Line to Cottonwood Creek

The UDOT I-15 Arizona State Line Pavement Preservation Project showcased a strategic approach to extending pavement life along a critical, high-volume corridor. Spanning 19.6 miles, the project used microsurfacing to fill ruts, improve ride quality, enhance skid resistance, and extend pavement life by an estimated five years.

Nighttime construction minimized traffic disruptions while targeted asphalt patching and surface smoothing improved ride uniformity and durability. Pavement markings were also upgraded to current MUTCD standards to improve safety and visibility.

The project highlights strong collaboration between UDOT, Intermountain Slurry Seal, and the design team to deliver a cost-effective preservation strategy that protects infrastructure investments and improves long-term performance.



Safety remained a top priority throughout construction. Intermountain Slurry Seal implemented daily safety briefings, enhanced nighttime lighting, and carefully planned traffic control measures, with additional support from the Utah Highway Patrol.

Small Project of the Year Geneva Rock — 2400 East 2400 South Heber City

This \$2,130,289 project consisted of widening the road and overlaying 2400 East 2400 South with half-inch HMA. The widening added a six-foot shoulder to each side of the road at a depth of three inches. The overlay was at a depth of two inches, and the existing asphalt was prepared with a variable-depth rototiller. One manhole, two drainage structures, signage and striping were added after paving was completed. Asphalt and concrete driveways were also replaced as part of the project.

The 2400 East 2400 South Project stands as a model of collaboration, precision, and innovation in roadway reconstruction. This UDOT-funded project widened and reconstructed a key corridor to meet modern safety and performance standards and improve mobility for Wasatch County.

From project initiation through completion, the team demonstrated exceptional planning and execution. The scope included complete roadway reconstruction, with a new structural base and hot-mix asphalt pavement, to provide a smooth, durable, and long-lasting surface. Improvements also encompassed rotomilling of existing pavement, new asphalt driveways, and extensive subgrade stabilization to ensure long-term structural integrity.

Comprehensive drainage and utility upgrades enhanced the corridors, functionality, and resilience. The work included new drainage pipe systems, manholes, and custom concrete structures designed to improve stormwater management, as well as the relocation of fire



hydrants, monument boxes, and installation of fiber roll barriers for erosion control and environmental protection.

Through careful planning and communication, the team successfully maintained safety conditions for workers, motorists, and pedestrians while ensuring that essential community services were maintained.

On the Road ... or Anywhere Else (like the UAC '26!)

We love seeing our UAPA members reading our magazine in print, but you can also read it online anytime, anywhere!

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UAPA's Excellence in Safety Awards

UAPA's Excellence in Safety Award is now in its second year and is an initiative that the UAPA Safety Committee is proud to have facilitated to recognize our industry leaders for outstanding safety efforts and achievements.

The objectives of this initiative are:

1. Elevate safety awareness and performance
2. Recognize UAPA member companies and partners for their dedication and commitment to safety
3. Provide a self-assessment tool to identify areas of growth in company-wide safety programs and processes
4. Reduce total recordable incident rates and save lives

The evaluation criteria established rewards leadership commitment and engagement, impact and measurable results of the safety program, originality and creativity in safety practices and the potential for implementation across the industry.

Scoring is completed by UAPA Safety Committee representatives for each category, and recognition is determined by the total points each submittal receives. The categories are structured to ensure that achievements are celebrated at every stage of safety culture development, from emerging efforts to advanced, innovative programs.

Excellence in Safety Award recognition levels are as follows:

- **UAPA Safety Champion of the Year:** Awarded to the top-performing/highest-scoring member company or partner for outstanding, innovative safety results.
- **Platinum:** Awarded to members and partners scoring in the top 10% of total points.
- **Gold:** Awarded to members and partners scoring 80 to 89% of total points possible.
- **Silver:** Acknowledges member companies and partnering organizations who are in the early stages of establishing a safety culture.

UAPA is pleased to announce the recipients of this year's Excellence in Safety Award:

- **Gold Level:**
 - > Geneva Rock Products
 - > Go Pave Utah
- **Platinum Level:**
 - > Staker Parson Companies
 - > Granite Construction/Intermountain Slurry Seal
- **UAPA Safety Champion of the Year:**
 - > Granite Construction/Intermountain Slurry Seal

Congratulations to all recipients of the 2026 UAPA Excellence in Safety Award Program (EISA). We also appreciate the dedication of our Safety Committee members in developing this valuable safety initiative.

Gold Level — UAPA's Excellence in Safety Award



Platinum Level — UAPA's Excellence in Safety Award



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UAPA's First "Family Night" Was a Success!

Our members work long hours, especially now that paving season is starting. Hosting a "family night" as part of the annual conference not only gave our members time with their families but also provided an opportunity to expose their children to professional

environments, hopefully inspiring future career goals and fostering an understanding of their parents' work.

And what kid can resist a life-sized Tonka truck? It was hard to gauge what was more popular — the giant sandbox, the Legos, or the equipment itself.



We're All on a Journey — You're Paving the Way!

What an incredible couple of days!

- 97 booths
- 25 classes
- 35 hours of CEU/PDH
- 12 scholarships awarded
- 471 high schoolers
- 1,327 attendees

By all accounts, UAC '26 was a tremendous success, highlighting a record-setting turnout and engaged discussions on the future of all things asphalt.

A special thanks to our sponsors and speakers for making this a memorable event that truly advanced our industry.

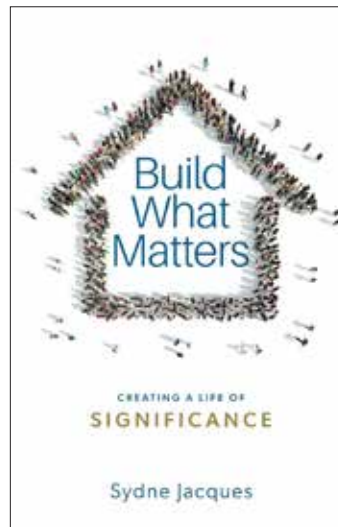
Our appreciation to our members, attendees, and presenters for making this year's asphalt conference the achievement our staff worked so hard to accomplish. Your dedication and engagement were tangible, fueling valuable conversations on technology, worker safety, and quality paving.

We cannot wait to see you all next year!





UAC '26 Keynote Speaker



Sydne Jacques is the CEO of Next Level Leadership near Salt Lake City, Utah, and she is an engineer turned professional speaker and consultant who's known as "the engineer with a personality." She has built an award-winning company with clients from Brazil to Japan, and all across the United States. She has trained more than 20,000 people and worked with over 600 construction teams worldwide.

Her new book, *Build What Matters*, inspires readers to remember to "Build People" as they build construction projects. Recognized as one of Utah Business Magazine's "30 Women to Watch" and Utah Valley Biz Magazine's "10 Coolest Entrepreneurs," Sydne brings energy, humor, and actionable insights to every audience.

Offstage, she treasures time with her very patient husband, their four grown children, and her grandson, Finn, who is, without question, the light of her life.



Leading By Choosing a Life of Intention

Most people start their day on autopilot. Leaders don't have that luxury.

Intentional leadership begins the moment your feet hit the floor in the morning, not when you arrive at the office or job site.

Choosing your attitude first does not mean pretending everything is easy. It means deciding to show up as the kind of leader people can count on: steady, optimistic, and focused on solutions.

Several truths consistently stand out:

- Intentional leaders have greater influence.
- A leader's energy sets the tone for everyone around them.
- A simple decision — “Today I will build, not tear down” — can shape meetings, projects, and relationships.

That mindset matters now more than ever.

Local governments face shrinking workforces, rising recruitment costs, and strained budgets, creating an urgent need to rethink retention strategies. Retention can no longer be viewed as only an HR issue; it must become a leadership priority across the organization.

Three key components are essential to creating a retention revolution.

Move beyond “the way it's always been done.”

Employees have more options than ever before. Organizations must adapt to a changing workforce and create cultures where people are not only satisfied, but loyal.

Intentionally build a culture where people want to stay.

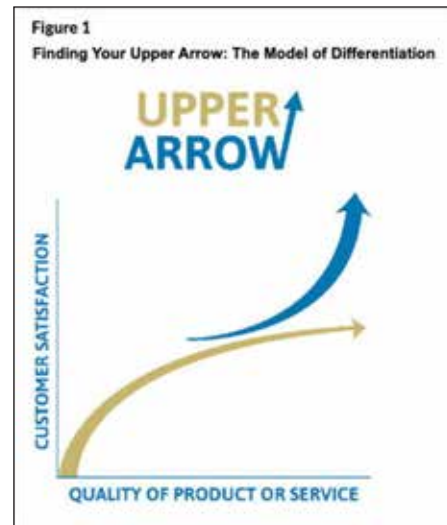
Most leaders recognize the retention problem but struggle with solutions. Tools like the Upper Arrow can help organizations create culture by design rather than by default.

Become the kind of leader people choose to follow.

Strong cultures begin at the top. Being present, celebrating wins, and leading with purpose help create teams that feel valued and supported.

Before discussing solutions, leaders must understand the mindset behind them.

Sydne Jacques's Upper Arrow concept explains the relationship between quality and satisfaction in both customer and employee relationships.



Quality service is expected. If organizations fail to deliver it, people leave. But once a baseline of quality is reached, additional improvements produce diminishing returns. What creates loyalty are the “Upper Arrows” — the experiences and cultural elements that go beyond expectations.

Airlines provide a simple example. Customers expect safe, reliable travel. What builds loyalty are the extras: frequent flyer programs, Wi-Fi, free baggage, or flexible changes.

The same principle applies to employee retention.

Competitive pay and benefits are essential, but they are only the baseline. Organizations must identify the Upper Arrows that set them apart.

Employees consistently describe ideal workplaces as safe, supportive, and enjoyable. Culture remains the strongest Upper Arrow for retaining great employees.

Intentional leadership creates those moments. When leaders are purposeful with their words, actions, and energy, they create cultures where people want to stay.



Chad Hymas is a globally recognized motivational speaker, bestselling author, and safety advocate whose life story stands as a powerful testament to resilience, purpose, and transformation. After a ranching accident left him paralyzed from the chest down, Chad refused to accept limitations. Instead, he turned adversity into opportunity, wheeling 513 miles in a world-record journey and becoming one of the youngest individuals ever inducted into the National Speaker Hall of Fame.

Today, Chad connects deeply with construction professionals by speaking directly to the realities they face every day: tight deadlines, physically demanding work, and high-risk environments where one moment of distraction can change everything. Through heartfelt storytelling, practical strategies, and genuine humor, he challenges individuals and teams to stay focused, look out for one another, and take ownership of safety at every level.

A central theme of Chad's message is the critical importance of situational awareness. On a construction site, hazards are constantly changing — moving equipment, shifting conditions, and evolving tasks demand full attention. Chad emphasizes that staying present, recognizing risks in real time, and making deliberate, safety-first decisions are what prevent incidents before they happen. It's not just about following procedures — it's about being mentally engaged, aware of your surroundings, and committed to protecting yourself and your crew.

Chad's safety insights serve as a powerful reminder that safety isn't just a policy — it's a mindset and a responsibility. By sharing real-life experiences and actionable strategies, he empowers construction teams to build a culture of awareness and accountability that endures for generations — ultimately saving lives and ensuring everyone goes home safe at the end of the day.

Why Situational Awareness Is Important

One of the most common causes of workplace injuries is a lack of situational awareness. Situational awareness means understanding what is happening around you, recognizing its significance, anticipating potential risks, and taking action before those risks become real issues.

On a job site, conditions can change in an instant. That's why it's critical to fully understand your surroundings before starting any task. This includes being aware of moving personnel, lifted materials, operating equipment, uneven ground, and any other factors that could create an unsafe environment. Familiarizing yourself with the layout of the site helps you recognize changes and identify hazards early.

Distractions are a major threat to situational awareness. These can range from phone calls and text messages to lingering personal concerns. Even minor distractions can lead to mistakes, delays, or serious safety risks for you and your crew.

Situational awareness is essential for keeping yourself and your team safe. Developed by the National Safety Council, the SLAM method — Stop, Look, Assess, Manage — helps workers identify hazards early, make informed decisions and prevent accidents.

1. Stop: Take a Moment to Prepare

Before beginning any task, pause. Take a breath and focus your attention on the work ahead. This brief moment allows you to mentally prepare and ensures you're fully present.

For example, before operating a scissor lift, ask yourself:

- Do I understand the task?
- Have I inspected the equipment?
- Am I aware of what's happening around me?

This quick check can prevent accidents and set you up for success. Stopping also gives you time to confirm that you have the proper training and protective equipment.

2. Look: Scan Your Environment

Carefully observe your surroundings to identify potential hazards. Pay attention to both moving and stationary elements, as well as anything out of place.

For instance, before operating a crane, check for:

- Obstructions in the path
- Nearby workers
- Ground stability

Looking closely means noticing details others might overlook — such as debris that could cause a trip hazard or unsafe conditions in confined spaces.

3. Assess: Evaluate the Risks

Once you've observed your environment, evaluate the risks. Ask yourself what could go wrong, how severe it could be, and how it can be prevented.

If you're cutting metal, consider:

- Could the material shift unexpectedly?
- Are there flammable materials nearby?

Assessing risks also includes considering the broader environment, such as traffic near a work zone or fall hazards when working at height.

4. Manage: Take Action to Control Hazards

After identifying risks, take steps to control or eliminate them. This may include setting up barriers, using spotters, securing materials, or improving communication with your team.

Effective risk management is proactive. It ensures safety measures are in place before an incident occurs — not after.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1,034 construction-related deaths were reported in 2024, underscoring the importance of awareness on the job. Additionally, the average cost of a construction injury is approximately \$42,000, with total industry costs exceeding \$11.5 billion annually.

Beyond financial impact, workplace injuries can harm a company's reputation, reduce morale, and make it harder to attract and retain employees.

A strong commitment to safety protects not only workers but also the future of the organization.



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Miriam Call, Marketing

Paige Neuenschwander, Marketing

Seniors, BYU

Encouraging Younger Workers to Apply for Construction Jobs

Miriam Call and Paige Neuenschwander presented on the current workforce challenges facing the construction industry. As the industry continues to grow, it is projected to require hundreds of thousands of additional workers. However, the workforce gap continues to widen, with more individuals leaving the field than entering it. Currently, for every seven workers who leave the industry, only one new worker joins.

In their scholarship presentation, Call and Neuenschwander explored strategies for attracting younger generations to careers in construction and addressed what the industry can do to improve recruitment and long-term workforce development.



Attracting and Retaining Young People in the Construction Industry

The workforce is changing. Younger generations are becoming more strategic about their career decisions. Many would rather work smarter than harder, and the days of working solely for a paycheck are largely in the past. Today, people expect more from their employers — they want flexible schedules, a healthy work-life balance, and strong benefits.

Despite these expectations, the construction industry faces a major challenge: less than 3% of young people are interested in pursuing construction careers. Additionally, for every seven workers leaving the industry, only one enters. To address this gap, construction companies must rethink how they attract and retain younger workers.

1. Improve Job Advertising

One of the biggest issues is that many construction job advertisements fail to resonate with younger audiences. While positions are posted daily on platforms like LinkedIn and Indeed, they often don't stand out.

On average, job seekers spend only about 14 seconds reviewing a job posting before moving on. To capture attention, companies need to be creative and intentional. Job descriptions should be clear, concise, and engaging, highlighting responsibilities, salary, and benefits in a way that is easy to understand and appealing.

Younger workers also want to join companies that prioritize employee well-being and foster a culture of safety and respect. In addition, the application process should be simple and efficient — ideally taking no more than 30 minutes to complete.

According to the Associated Builders and Contractors, the construction industry will need to attract nearly 499,000 new workers by 2026, making effective recruiting strategies more important than ever.

2. Offer Flexibility and Better Working Conditions

Construction is one of the most labor-intensive industries, particularly in areas like asphalt work. Employees often work long hours outdoors in unpredictable weather conditions, sometimes in 12-hour shifts.

To help address these challenges, many companies are offering more flexible scheduling options. Allowing workers to choose shifts gives them greater autonomy and helps them balance work with their personal lives. Since many projects require around-the-clock work, this flexibility can benefit both employees and employers.

Companies are also improving working conditions by providing essentials like water, regular breaks, and safer scheduling practices. Night shifts, especially in asphalt work, are often used to avoid extreme heat and heavy traffic, and employees are typically compensated with differential pay.

3. Invest in Education and Technology

Technology is rapidly transforming the construction industry, making jobs safer and more efficient. At the same time, rising education costs are causing young people to be more selective about their career paths.

To attract talent, many construction companies now offer tuition reimbursement programs, covering 50% to 100% of education costs. This is especially appealing to Millennials and Gen Z individuals pursuing engineering or related fields, as it allows them to gain experience without accumulating significant debt.

For context, a four-year engineering degree in places like Utah can cost between \$32,000 and \$48,000. Programs that offset these costs provide a strong incentive for young workers to enter the industry.

4. Prioritize Safety

Safety remains a major concern for younger workers considering construction careers. Many are deterred by the physical risks and long-term health issues associated with the job, such as repetitive strain injuries, back problems, knee issues, and hearing loss.

Hearing loss, in particular, is a significant issue, with studies showing that 31% to 48% of workers required to wear ear protection do not consistently use it.

To address these concerns, companies are implementing

comprehensive safety training programs and strictly enforcing the use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Workers are not allowed to operate machinery without proper training, and access to certain areas requires appropriate gear such as hard hats and steel-toed boots.

When employees feel safe and supported, they are more likely to stay with the company long-term.

5. Develop Mentorship Programs and Career Pathways

The average construction worker is around 38 years old, and many experienced workers eventually transition into management roles or retire, taking valuable knowledge with them.

To bridge this skills gap, companies should invest in mentorship programs. These programs pair younger employees with experienced workers, allowing them to learn on the job and gain valuable insights. This helps preserve institutional knowledge and ensures continuity within the workforce.

In addition, companies must offer clear career pathways and competitive wages. Employees should earn a livable income that allows them to afford basic needs like housing, food, and some level of personal enjoyment. When workers feel financially secure and see opportunities for growth, they are more likely to remain in the industry.

The construction industry is at a critical turning point. To attract and retain younger workers, companies must modernize their approach — offering flexibility, competitive benefits, strong safety practices, and meaningful career development opportunities. By adapting to the expectations of today's workforce, construction companies can build a stronger, more sustainable future.



Erick Faro, MS in Construction Engineering Management

Maria Acuna Alfaro, PhD in Counseling Psychology

Seniors, BYU

Mental Health in Construction — Behind Every Hard Hat Is a Human Heart

The construction industry plays a vital role in driving economic growth, developing essential infrastructure, and providing employment opportunities for a large workforce. Despite its importance, mental health challenges within the industry often remain overlooked. In fact, 83% of construction workers report having experienced a mental health issue at some point in their careers.

In their scholarship presentation, Faro and Alfaro examined the underlying causes of this growing concern, exploring why these challenges persist within the industry and highlighting practical solutions. Their presentation also showcased initiatives from companies in the field that are working to provide meaningful care, support, and mental health resources for their workforce.



Mental Health in Construction: A Growing Crisis

Construction is one of the most demanding and underappreciated industries. Workers often face high-stress environments, long hours, and chronic physical pain. Constant physical labor can lead to ongoing pain and injury, which in turn may contribute to depression, addiction, and even suicide.

Despite these challenges, mental health is frequently overlooked in a field that promotes a “tough-it-out” culture.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), construction has the second-highest suicide rate of any industry, with a rate approximately 75% higher than the national average. Many workers cope with anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts by turning to alcohol or drugs. Data from the American Addiction Centers shows that 15% of construction workers have a substance abuse disorder, and 16.5% report heavy alcohol consumption.

Additionally, workers are increasingly exposed to hard drugs, such as opioids — often prescribed for pain relief — which can lead to dependency. Marijuana is another commonly used substance, valued for its calming effects and ease of concealment. About 2.3% of workers report using marijuana as a way to cope with stress and depression.

Substance use presents a twofold risk in construction. Not only can it worsen mental health, but it also significantly increases the likelihood of accidents in an already dangerous industry. Drugs and alcohol are often used as a form of self-medication — a temporary solution that can create long-term harm.

Workplace culture also contributes to the problem. Approximately 80% of construction workers are male, and many feel a strong obligation to be the primary providers for their families. This pressure can lead them to take on excessive responsibilities without seeking help. For some, asking for support is perceived as a sign of weakness. Research from Men’s Health indicates that 75% of men in provider roles have experienced suicidal thoughts.

Mental health is critical to both individual well-being and job performance. When workers neglect their mental health, they are more likely to experience burnout, stress, disengagement, and reduced productivity. Disengaged employees can also become safety risks, as a lack of focus increases the chance of accidents. In fact, one in 10 workplace injuries each year is linked to a lack of situational awareness.

Despite the importance of mental health, companies often invest more in physical health due to the demands of the job. Access to mental health resources on job sites remains limited. About 40% of construction workers do not receive paid sick leave, meaning they may be forced to work even when mentally exhausted. Additionally, many supervisors lack training to address mental health concerns.

According to the National Safety Council (NSC), 36% of workers say safety is sometimes sacrificed to meet deadlines, and 39% believe management does only the minimum required to keep employees safe. Even when resources are available, access can be delayed — sometimes requiring workers to wait up to three months for help.

There are several ways to address these challenges. Implementing regular break times and rest periods can give workers an opportunity to step away, decompress, and reset. Even short breaks of 15-30 minutes can make a significant difference. A Tork survey found that 90% of North American employees feel more refreshed and focused after taking a lunch break.

Reducing stress on job sites can also be achieved through simple actions. Encouraging supportive relationships, listening to coworkers, and offering constructive feedback can foster a healthier work environment. Regular check-ins and creating a “no-judgment” culture allow employees to speak openly about their struggles. Recognizing achievements and celebrating small wins can also boost morale — sometimes, a simple compliment can make a meaningful difference.

Employers should ensure that mental health resources are accessible to all workers. Many companies are beginning to offer programs such as free counseling or therapy, and about 63% now provide Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). Additional resources, including substance abuse programs and suicide prevention hotlines, are also available for those in need.

The data is clear: stigma continues to prevent construction workers from addressing their mental health needs. The industry must shift its message to emphasize that seeking help is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength.

If you or someone you know is facing mental health struggles, emotional distress or substance use concerns, call or text 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline or go to [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org).

Civil Construction Course at Jordan School District

Students from the new Civil Construction course in the Jordan School District presented a safety meeting module as part of a class project. The course is taught by our own UAPA team member, Gary Lindley, and to say he was proud of his students would be an understatement.

In the Civil Construction course, high school students explore the dynamic and rapidly growing field of civil construction. Students not only learn foundational concepts but also participate in design projects, interact with industry professionals, and gain valuable skills directly applicable to a variety of civil construction careers. Topics covered in the course include construction basics, safety, math and measurements, earthwork, drainage, utilities, concrete, asphalt and more.



High School Outreach

“The future millionaires in America may not be software engineers or Ivy League graduates — they might be plumbers, electricians, and hands-on skilled workers. As AI and automation take over white-collar tasks, technical trades will become the backbone of the economy. These are not ‘backup careers’ anymore — they are frontline roles in an AI-powered world.”

— Jensen Huang

As the current workforce ages out, a shortage of well over 500,000 skilled trade workers has created high demand in the field of construction. Many skilled workers can earn six-figure incomes without the burden of student debt. Yet, trends show that more people are leaving the construction field than entering it. Studies show that for every seven workers who leave the field, only one worker enters the field. Given the need for more construction workers — including the asphalt pavement field — UAPA is collaborating with local schools to introduce construction-related careers to high school students.

Each year, UAPA invites hundreds of high school students to attend the annual conference to present the varied career options in the asphalt pavement field. At UAC '26, UAPA's Bup Minardi and Tim Nevenner spent time with the students, discussing their career thoughts and insights and answering questions.



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Get Your Head in the Game with UAPA's Pre-Season Safety Initiative

Construction and asphalt projects pose significant safety risks, including fatal falls, struck-by incidents from heavy equipment, electrocution, and caught-in-between hazards. Asphalt work specifically carries risks of severe burns, respiratory issues from fumes, and skin irritations, demanding rigorous PPE and safety protocols. Approximately 1,000+ construction workers die annually in the U.S. (1,075 in 2023), with paving and road construction being particularly dangerous. Road construction specifically causes about 89 worker deaths annually, while paving operators face a high fatal injury rate of 46.7 per 100,000 workers, 13 times higher than average.

As the paving season kicked off across Utah, UAPA also kicked off its new safety training initiative — Pre-Season: Get Your Head in the Game.

The first class was held in Price at the end of March, and the attendance let us know that our focus on safety for our members was equally met by our members' engagement with these classes.

Pre-Season: Get Your Head in the Game is a statewide, in-person training initiative led by the Utah Asphalt

Pavement Association (UAPA), supported by UDOT and UHP, and is partially funded through a safety grant from the State of Utah. The focus of this safety training was to prepare Utah's asphalt workforce — contractors, subcontractors, cities, counties, and agency partners — for a safe, compliant, and productive paving season.

This course establishes a shared, practical foundation around work-zone safety, internal traffic control, daily planning, mental preparedness, and emergency response. The program emphasizes what crews must know before the first ton is placed, including certifications, PPE expectations, equipment awareness, and how to respond when something goes wrong.

Each session opened with a video welcome from Carlos Braceras (UDOT) and closed with a video from Governor Spencer Cox — reinforcing statewide alignment and expectations — followed by remarks from a local dignitary. UDOT participation and local first responders are integrated throughout the program.

The course focuses on:

- PPE and working safely around asphalt and maintenance equipment
- Work-zone safety across parking lots, side roads, streets, highways, and freeways
- Internal Traffic Control Plans and legal certification requirements (flaggers, TCPs, stamped plans)
- Daily kickoff meetings (e.g., "Toolbox Talks," "Tailgate Talks," "Pre-Task Briefings") that include "what-if" planning
- Mental preparedness, fatigue awareness, and stop-work authority
- Emergency response, documentation, notification protocols, and risk management

Pre-Season: Get Your Head in the Game is designed to ensure everyone — from owners to subs to field crews — starts each season on the same page, looking out for one another, and committed to getting everyone home safely every day.

As part of the Pre-season: Get Your Head in the Game classes, UAPA handed out a curriculum booklet to support safety training throughout the year. If you would like a copy of this booklet, please call the UAPA office at (801) 708-0486. We are happy to make sure you receive a copy!






**GET YOUR
HEAD IN**
THE GAME
Utah Asphalt
Pavement Association





JOIN THE MOVEMENT DRIVING WOMEN FORWARD



WHY JOIN?

Join Women of Asphalt (WofA)—a national community supporting the recruitment, growth, and leadership of women across the asphalt industry. No matter your career stage, WofA connects you with the resources and opportunities to thrive.

Now with 27 branches (and counting), WofA is activating change across the country through workforce development initiatives, career-building resources, and a growing national network.

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY.

Together, we're shaping the future of the industry—one woman, one opportunity, one mile at a time.



A New Era of Workforce Development

There is a misconception that men completely dominate the construction industry. It is true that men do outnumber women in the construction workforce, but there are ambitious women trailblazers who are affecting the traditional dynamic.

For many women, the asphalt industry is a rapidly growing career field, with women (now making up 20% of the industry) breaking barriers in roles ranging from field crew to C-suite executives.

Women work across the entire spectrum of asphalt production and paving, including:

- **Field Operations:** Roller operators, paver operators, and crew forewomen.
- **Technical & Quality:** Lab technicians, engineers, and chemists designing pavement mix.
- **Management & Ownership:** Project managers and executives.
- **Administrative & Safety:** Health and safety specialists, and office administrators.

Along with other construction-related sub-sections, there is a shift in the asphalt industry towards gender inclusivity. Companies are beginning to recognize the importance of diversity and what women bring to the table: different experiences and skill sets. However, there is still a long way to go before women increasingly fill the numerous job openings within the industry.

Recognizing the gap, Women of Asphalt was founded in 2017 with a mission to create a dues-free, accessible community that elevates women at all stages of their careers.

Recruiting and retaining women in asphalt comes with both awareness and practical challenges. For some, the first barrier is simply visibility. “A lot of women don’t consider or even know about careers in construction because they haven’t been marketed to us,” Brittyn Heisler, Executive Director of Women of Asphalt, remarked. Without targeted outreach, entire career paths can go unnoticed.

Even when women enter the field, balancing work and family responsibilities can be another hurdle, as there are often strange hours and shifts that more traditional jobs do not require.

That is why professional development, mentorship, and community are so critical. Women of Asphalt works to fill those gaps through its national mentorship program,

educational webinars, and networking opportunities — resources designed to keep women engaged and supported at every stage of their careers.

As Women of Asphalt paves the way for a more diverse and equitable future, the asphalt industry stands to benefit from the full spectrum of talent that women have to offer. Hiring and retaining women in the industry is not solely about meeting diversity quotas; it is an investment in talent.

Women are playing an increasingly key role in the asphalt industry, helping to address ongoing labor shortages across the field. As more women enter the workforce, they continue to demonstrate that they are just as capable of performing these industry roles as their male counterparts, breaking down barriers and inspiring others to pursue similar career paths. Expanding opportunities for women is a meaningful step toward strengthening the industry, particularly in areas such as paving, plant operations, and leadership.

Progress is being made. Women in asphalt careers earn about ninety-six cents for every dollar a man makes, significantly higher than the national average of eighty-five cents. Women are advancing the asphalt industry by giving other women a voice and a foot in the door to the industry. They are essential to the future of the construction industry because they bring new perspectives that strengthen the workforce and help close the critical labor gaps.

To join the Utah Chapter, please email Alicia Winterstein at Alicia.Winterstein@aecom.com or visit utahasphalt.org/women-of-asphalt.

Listen: “How Women of Asphalt Is Advancing Diversity and Careers in Asphalt”

Women of Asphalt President Sheila Barkevich discussed the organization’s history and impact on an episode of “Pave It Black,” the official podcast of the National Asphalt Pavement Association. Scan the QR code to listen!



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLSbHFncyUY>

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UAPA Bids Farewell to an Industry Friend

Larry Dee Brown

March 30, 1951-April 2, 2026

Larry Dee Brown, beloved husband, father, brother and friend, passed away on April 2, 2026, in Erda, Utah, after a brief battle with cancer. He was born on March 30, 1951, in Murray, Utah, to Doug and Bee Brown of Riverton. He was one of seven siblings and was the oldest boy among two brothers and four sisters. Larry graduated from Bingham High School in 1969 and married his high school sweetheart, Deborah Ann Bluemel of South Jordan, on June 4, 1970. They were married for almost 56 years.

Larry graduated from the University of Utah in 1973 with a degree in Business and Economics. He started his career at Century Equipment, working in the parts room part-time. He started working at Cate Equipment Company in 1977 and spent the next 25 years working there. He moved to Wheeler Machinery as their Caterpillar Paving Products sales rep in 2001, until he retired in 2017. He loved all things paving.

He also loved giving back to the community and donating his time, and he held numerous leadership positions in both commercial and community capacities. His garden was his pride and joy, and if you knew Larry, you probably received a watermelon or a zucchini at some point along the way. Larry loved life and would talk to anyone. If you met him and he liked you, you would be considered a friend forever, but there was no one he loved more than his four grandkids.

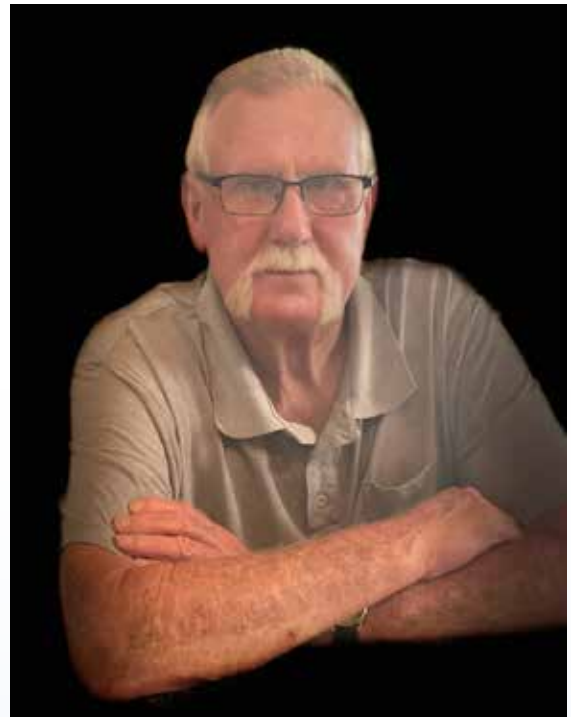
Larry is survived by his wife, Debbie, his daughters, Shelly Strahan (Michael) and Jo Watterson (Brady), as well as his four grandchildren, Wyatt and Jake (Shelly) and Beau and Oaklie (Jo). He is also survived by six of his seven siblings. He is preceded in death by his parents, Doug and Bee, as well as his older sister, Paula Noorda.

All of us here at UAPA — staff, Board of Directors and members — will hold Larry's family in our thoughts and prayers. As we do, we'll give Larry the last word:

"I've had a wonderful life and career. Me and Debbie had a good run for 55+ years. Let's just remember the good times and fun we had over the years. I want to thank my good friend and partner at Wheeler, Aaron Venz, for his friendship and help over the years. We traveled a lot of miles together and had a lot of fun and hard work to build our legacy at the Cat store. I can't wait to unite with my Dad and Grandpa Ollie. I hope they realize how much I respected and admired them. I leave behind my legacy: my two wonderful daughters and four grandkids. I hope they realize how proud I was to be their Grandpa.

Sorry, but I have to leave now. Got a meeting with St. Peter. I guess I'll finally find out which button on the elevator to push, up or down.

Love, Larry."



Go Pave Utah Achieves Avetta Compliance

Avetta is a global supply chain risk management platform that connects companies with pre-qualified contractors and suppliers through a rigorous certification and compliance process. Companies that achieve Avetta compliance have demonstrated that they meet established safety, regulatory, insurance and financial standards designed to reduce risk across construction and industrial projects.

Achieving Avetta compliance reinforces Go Pave Utah's commitment to maintaining safety standards that exceed minimum OSHA requirements. It also provides clients and project partners with added confidence that their team operates with the training, procedures and operational discipline required to perform safely and efficiently on complex jobsites.

As part of the certification process, Go Pave Utah completed comprehensive safety compliance audits and developed detailed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and safety programs covering 19 critical safety areas. These measures help ensure Go Pave Utah is fully aligned with the compliance expectations commonly required on large-scale commercial and industrial projects.



“We developed and reviewed numerous Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and safety programs, covering 19 different safety topics — yes, 19. However, being Avetta-compliant is much more than just a paperwork exercise. It serves as a badge of honor that demonstrates our commitment to world-class safety protocols and operational standards. In many cases, it is also a prerequisite for bidding on and maintaining large-scale contracts. Most importantly, it assures our clients that we maintain the insurance coverage, safety training and operational practices necessary to work on their sites without increasing their risk profile,” said Barney Boynton, Go Pave Utah's CEO.

For many general contractors and project owners, Avetta compliance is an important qualification when selecting subcontractors and project partners. By achieving this certification, Go Pave Utah is better positioned to integrate seamlessly into client compliance systems, support project risk management efforts, and deliver reliable performance from prequalification through project completion.

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UAPA Would Love to Publish Your News!

As a member-driven organization, we want to celebrate and share your achievements, events, and updates. If you have something to share, please contact marketing/communications director, Sophie Hanson at (801) 706-0599 or sophie.hanson@contentfocus.net. We look forward to hearing from you!

On the Cover: The cover photo features the winning submission for Large Project of the Year from Burdick Materials and UDOT of the US-191 realignment, north of Vernal.

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