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September/October 2020
The geography of Ecuador is defined by the Andes Mountains that split it in two. On the west side are the Pacific Ocean and fertile coastal plains known as “La Costa” containing some of the richest farmland in South America. To the east in “El Oriente” is the enormous Amazon rainforest, home of many indigenous tribes and near-impenetrable national parks. The Andean “Sierra” that runs down the center includes some of the tallest volcanoes on Earth, towering up to 20,000 feet into the sky and still a very much active part of the Pacific’s Ring of Fire.

Like many of its neighbors in the north of the continent, Ecuador is blessed with abundant petroleum reserves that have accounted for up to 40 to 60 percent of the country’s exports since serious drilling began in the late 1960s. Ecuador’s unique geography, however, presented a major problem: the oil deposits were all on the Amazonian side of the mountains. The Sierra presented a formidable barrier to get oil across from the drilling fields to the ports on the coast.

To solve this problem, the government commissioned the building of the Trans-Ecuadorean Pipeline in 1972. The 26-inch-diameter pipe and associated pump and pressure reducing stations would transport nearly all of the nation’s crude oil to a marine terminal port near Esmeraldas on the Pacific coast. The smaller 6-inch Poliducto Pipeline would later be built along the same right of way as far as Quito to transport propane gas and other hydrocarbons.

Where mountain and jungle come together over
a tectonic plate boundary, however, even the best petroleum and pipeline engineering will be challenged by the forces of nature – and these pipelines hardly benefited from the best engineering, planning, or maintenance. When the east Andean foothills were rocked by a pair of large earthquakes in 1987, one location with a 500 year-long record of trouble became the site of the worst pipeline disaster in history.

The Danger Zone
In order to follow the path of least resistance through the mountains, the Trans-Ecuadorean Pipeline winds through a series of river valleys and steep canyons lined with dense rainforest, buried in some places and exposed in others and largely paralleling the Trans-Ecuadorean Highway. Most of these rivers have their headwaters not too far upstream. One of the few relatively long, straight stretches in this maze runs along the Coca River past the base of an 11,000-foot peak. Not just any peak, however – this one is known as El Reventador (“The Exploder” in Spanish).

El Reventador is a classic stratovolcano with a conical shape, built from a combination of lava and pyroclastic flows (hot ash clouds that roar down the slope at high speeds). Thick forest covers the slopes most of the way up, but at the top a cone of naked rock rises from the center of a 2.5-mile wide horseshoe-shaped caldera. The collapsed wall of the caldera faces east toward the Coca River valley below.

El Reventador is known to have erupted at least 26 times since records first began in 1541, including in 1972 and 1973 during the construction of the pipeline. Lava flows from a 1977 eruption came within a mile and a half of the pipeline. The volcano’s frequent ash eruptions coupled with heavy equatorial rains also mean that the area has a long history of volcanic mudflows known as lahars. Add to this the fact that the pipeline crosses 94 seismic fault lines along its entire length, and you have a formula for a substantial amount of trouble.

The Earthquakes
Late in the evening on Thursday, March 5, 1987, the inevitable happened. At 8:55 p.m., an earthquake registering 6.1 on the Richter scale shook the slopes of the northern Andes. The dust didn’t even have time to settle before a second, even larger quake registering 6.9 followed it in the same spot just 16 minutes later. Buildings as far away as Quito 70 miles to the southeast suffered significant damage, but the worst consequences would be seen near the epicenter for both quakes, just ten miles west of El Reventador.

Two months of unseasonably heavy rains around the mountain had made the soils wet and heavy, and the double whammy of intense shaking gave gravity the upper hand over the strength of the slopes. Vast tracts of the volcano’s flanks slumped into the Dué River on its north slope and the Coca River to the east, damming up both rivers to catastrophic effect.

The Dué River is a tributary of the Aguarico River, which the Trans-Ecuadorean and Poliducto pipelines cross over before entering the Coca River valley. Water quickly backed up behind the new earthen dams in the valley, and having nowhere else to go, soon began cutting through them. Once the blockages were breached, an enormous plug of water roared downstream into the Aguarico, overwhelming the highway bridge and pipeline crossing to as much as 16 feet above the bridge deck and completely destroying it. To the west of the crossing where the pipeline stretched between rivers, two and a half miles of above-ground pipe were knocked or dragged off their supports.

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Landslides along the northeastern slope of Reventador created numerous localized breaks in the line, but it was the damming of the Coca River below the crater that caused the most severe damage. The extensive flooding behind the debris flow began scouring out the sides of the valley, undermining the right of way for the pipeline almost anywhere it remained exposed in a seven and a half mile stretch. Nearly all buildings and equipment further upstream at the Salado Pump Station, including a crude oil tank containing around 4,500 barrels of oil, were damaged or destroyed by debris flows.

Gasping for Breath
Later assessments determined that the damage caused by the shaking of the earthquakes was relatively limited, but the resultant widespread landslides and flooding caused an estimated 1,000 deaths and either damaged or completely destroyed nearly 44 miles of pipeline and highway. Thousands of homes in towns like Baeza, Lumbaquí, El Chaco, and Díaz de Pineda were damaged beyond repair. There appears to be no accurate estimate of how much oil was spilled into the Amazonian environment, but the pipeline’s transport capacity was roughly 250,000 barrels per day and it remains unclear how long it took to shut off the flow. Approximately 25 miles of the 309 mile-long pipeline would have to be reconstructed, making this the single largest pipeline failure in history.

The economic implications of the failure for Ecuador were staggering. Oil accounted for 60 percent of Ecuador’s export revenue in 1987, and it would take six months before the reconstructed line could begin service again in August. The result was an estimated loss of $800 million, in addition to the $50 million it cost to rebuild the pipeline. Loss of the only highway across the mountains meant that farmers could not transport their crops to market, costing millions more in an already impoverished region. Relief labor and supplies could only make it in via airplane or a combination of primitive roads and river travel. The combination of destruction, isolation, unemployment, and pollution would have lasting effects on the local indigenous populations for years to come.

Within a week of the disaster, the Ecuadorean government was forced to institute a national austerity plan. They suspended payment of external debt to
private banks, increased fuel prices, and froze prices on certain essential goods among other measures. Internationally, 22 nations participated in disaster relief efforts. The price of West Texas Intermediate rose 6.25% in the days immediately following news of the earthquakes. Though oil prices were already rising at the time, market analysts claim that the suspension of exports further encouraged escalating prices.

Lessons Learned?
Even after the complete reconstruction of many miles of pipeline, state oil company Petroecuador invested little in maintenance, and by the 1990s the Trans-Ecuadorean Pipeline system was considered to be on the verge of collapse due to neglect. Many of the line’s pumping stations were in danger of breaking down. In 1997, the government enlisted oil companies in a new project to upgrade and refurbish the existing pipe and build a new crude oil pipe alongside it which would pave the way to double the country’s oil production.

Despite structural improvements, the region’s natural hazards have continued to cause disruptions and spills along the line. In late 2002, El Reventador produced the largest eruption in Ecuador in the last century to provide fresh loose deposits along its southeast flank, and in March 2004 heavy rains once again sent them tumbling into the Coca River and severed the pipeline. The same thing happened again in March 2008, less than a year after another eruption.

Since July 2008, El Reventador has been in a near continuous state of eruption. Still, the Ecuadorean government in 2016 contracted a Chinese construction company to build the Coca Codo Sinclair hydroelectric dam less than 10 miles from Reventador’s peak. The largest energy project in Ecuador’s history, it was meant to reduce the nation’s reliance on fossil fuels, but in December 2018 more than 7,600 cracks were identified in the structure around the generator hall, and the project has yet to reach full capacity. Additionally, the placement of the dam has increased erosion both upstream and downstream, causing significant changes in the course of the Coca River. The downstream erosion in February 2020 caused the San Rafael waterfall, Ecuador’s largest, to abruptly disappear, and by April 2020 had reached the buried pipelines, causing yet another spill. Some experts predict that downstream erosion could undermine the dam itself, along with nearby oil infrastructure, as early as 2022.

To be fair, there is probably no route through these forested foothills of the Andes that won’t present similar hazards while keeping construction and maintenance costs manageable. However, it does seem reasonable that Ecuador should consider running any future oil pipelines along a secondary route as a backup for the current one. The moral of the story here is don’t put all your eggs in one basket, and don’t build your oil pipeline next to a mountain called Exploder. ▲
SCHOLARSHIP
DCA Scholarships

The application process for the 2021-22 DCA - Dale R. Michels Scholarship and DCA – Curtis Allen Scholarship is now open on our website at: https://dcaweb.org/page/Scholarship and all applications will be completed online. Click on the link and simply scroll the page and find the scholarship that you are applying for, click the button and follow the instructions. Do not forget to upload an unofficial or official copy of your transcripts in a PDF (no jpg or tiff).

Please forward this email to other employees in your organization that you think may qualify or have family members that qualify for the scholarships.

A few basic guidelines:

• The DCA – Dale R. Michels Scholarship encourages students from all academic levels to apply. The DCA – Curtis H. Allen Scholarship focuses on those planning to attend a trade, technical or vocational school.

• Applications must include an unofficial or official copy of a transcript. Please see the specific scholarship for the correct transcript that should be uploaded.

• Remember, the student’s application and supporting documents must be completed no later than Monday, January 18, 2021.

• In the event that more than three (3) applications are received by DCA from a member company for each scholarship, the member company will be asked to review and select three (3) for inclusion in the application pool.

• The winning applicants will be awarded an unspecified amount of financial aid for the 2021-22 academic year and this amount could be renewable for up to four (4) years with proof of academic success for the Michels scholarship and two (2) years for the Allen scholarship.

• Financial need and community service will also continue to be considered by the scholarship committees.

The DCA-Dale R. Michels Scholarship Committee is comprised of the: DCA President, Treasurer, Past President Director, Associate Member Director, Ruth Michels, Michels Corp., and up to 5 members selected by appointment by the DCA President.

The DCA Curtis H. Allen Scholarship Committee is comprised of the: DCA Vice President, DCA Director at Large, DCA Alternate Associate Member Director, two Halliburton Representatives and one member selected by appointment by the DCA President.

As always, please contact tkorson@dcaweb.org if you have any questions. ▲
Save the Date for the 2021 DCA Convention
March 2-6 2021
Fairmont Scottsdale Princess
Scottsdale, Arizona
Save the Date for the 2021 DCA Convention
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Fairmont Scottsdale Princess
Scottsdale, Arizona
Convention Sponsorship

The Distribution Contractors Association’s Annual Convention is the featured event of the Association’s calendar year. DCA is very proud to be celebrating our 60th year as a benchmark for industry meetings and a gathering of the leaders of the gas distribution, HDD and utility construction industry.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the contractor members of DCA, we appreciate these 60 years of member corporate support of this event. DCA considers the convention a unique opportunity to build relationships with the suppliers of our equipment and services. Contractor members spending will reach millions of dollars on construction equipment and services your organization may have the opportunity to provide.

DCA understands that many of our members go to considerable effort to secure the funding we receive, and we therefore are committed to providing opportunities to network and foster relationships that can make a difference to our members.

Each sponsor will be provided optimum recognition at the convention based on their level of support.

2021 Sponsor Recognition Levels:*

- **Platinum:** $25,000 and above
- **Gold:** $10,000 - $24,999
- **Silver:** $5,000 - $9,999
- **Bronze:** $1,000 - $4,999

*equals a combination of the 2020 auction donation as determined by the winning bid for items donated, winning high bid of auction items purchased by anyone in your company and 2021 cash pledge

In order for DCA to make its financial plans for the event, we are asking you to please log on to our website to complete the form online by Wednesday, November 18, 2020.

Thank you for your generous support of DCA and the Annual Convention. If you have any questions, please contact DCA Director of Member Services Donna Reed at dreed@dcaweb.org or (469) 399-5588.
DCA is preparing for the 2021 Annual Convention and Auction. It goes without saying it has been an unusual and at times a difficult year which has impacted all of us. However, as we move forward it is important to keep in mind the auction provides DCA with financial resources supporting several scholarships and grants to deserving candidates. It also provides funding for its convention, meetings and other educational opportunities. Donations from member companies make all this possible. DCA requests your continued support and donations for the 2021 auction. We invite members to donate 1 to 3 highly sought-after pieces of equipment, trips, sporting events or even cash donations.

Visit: https://dcaweb.org/page/AnnualAuction for more information and to complete the online donor form. Donations need to be received no later than December 16, 2020. Donations made after this date will be accepted on a space available basis. Along with the donor form, please include a 50 word description along with a 300 dpi high resolution photo in jpeg format.

The auction will be held on March 4, 2021 during the DCA Annual Convention at the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess in Scottsdale, AZ.

If you have any questions or need item ideas, please contact Donna Reed at dreed@dcaweb.org or (469) 399-5588.
Pushed by the Pandemic, Virtual Career Fairs Become the New Norm

Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD)

Reaching potential job candidates can be challenging during the best of times, but during a pandemic – with personal interactions severely limited – the challenge grows even tougher.

Unable to hold in-person recruiting events, many in the energy industry have turned to virtual career fairs as a means of expanding their outreach. In the process, they’ve discovered that online events can sometimes be more successful than more traditional career fairs.

Here are some lessons learned from three companies: Consumers Energy, Dominion Energy and the Mears Group, as well as from CEWD.

Virtual fairs net broader reach
Consumers Energy began hosting virtual career fairs late last year, prior to the arrival of COVID-19, as a means of reaching greater numbers of potential hires across the Midwest without having to travel outside the state of Michigan. “It just so happened that our efforts landed right at the onset of the pandemic,” said Curtis Belen, Senior Inclusive Culture Consultant/Outreach Team Lead.

“One thing that doesn’t happen at (in-person) career fairs is people getting hired,” he said. “Because of that, attendance is low. People realize that no matter who they meet in our booth, they need to follow up with
somebody else through another platform. But with a virtual platform, we can cast a wider net and become more efficient gaining those touch points.”

Likewise, Dominion Energy had already discovered the value of virtual career fairs prior to the pandemic, said Senior Military Recruiting and Strategic Sourcing Specialist Saddiq Holliday. The company began using them late last year to better reach its target audience – transitioning military and veterans who often live in states far from the civilian jobs they’re pursuing.

“Military candidates can’t always go to local events if they are elsewhere trying to come back home,” said Holliday. “Having a schedule of virtual events allows us to meet those candidates wherever they are.”

Dominion Energy receives multiple requests every week to take part in virtual career fairs across the 18 states it serves, said Holliday. Some requests are for company representatives to answer questions or serve on panels at informational events. They also take part in or host recruiting events more specific to their hiring needs.

He estimates Dominion Energy reaches about 300 potential candidates each month through virtual events of both types.

**Target your marketing and collect more data**

Consumers Energy hosts two virtual events each month and targets these to specific populations, such as transitioning military, people with disabilities or women. They range in size from 20-30 individuals up to as many as 150, said Belen.

Marketing the events is easy to do online, said Mary Tschirhart, Digital Sourcing Specialist for Dominion Energy. When five members of the company’s talent acquisition team posted notices on their LinkedIn profiles, they succeeded in registering 250 participants for one event.

Another nice thing about online events? The ability to gather data on those who attend and tag them to maintain contact for follow-up. “We could expand well beyond name, email address and resume,” said Tschirhart. “We could ask additional questions like, ‘Do you have a military background? Are you a veteran? What kind of jobs are you interested in?’”

Because of the tags, said Tschirhart, they could follow up with participants afterwards by sending them links to

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jobs and encouraging them to set up online profiles. They could also easily track participants to see who created a profile and filed an application.

When taking part in fairs attended by multiple companies, access to participant data ahead of time allows companies to steer candidates toward their booth, said Holliday. “You get a lot of data about people prior to joining the fair. There’s an Excel spreadsheet you can look at ahead of time and you can send out emails to people if you like their resumes, ask them to stop by your booth and let them know you have a position open they might be interested in. It allows you to target people specifically, rather than standing behind a table wondering who you are going to meet.”

**Advanced access to data produces better prepared candidates**

While the level of candidate preparedness can vary, overall, those coming to virtual career fairs tend to be more prepared, companies noted. That’s in part because recruiters can fill their online booths with videos and information about their company and available jobs, which candidates can peruse prior to the event.

“We had a few where we’ve had great candidates who have been very well prepared. They did their research in advance,” said Stephanie Metzler, Vice President of Workforce Development for the Mears Group, which has participated in half a dozen virtual recruiting events since the pandemic began. “They do have an opportunity to log in before it starts and they can list who they want to chat with.”

“Those who are participating in the military career fairs are far more prepared than those in the general career fairs,” said added.

Typically, virtual career fairs last about two hours and recruiters can chat with potential candidates for up to 10 minutes, sometimes chatting with more than one at a time. While they are chatting, recruiters can look at a candidate’s resume on the side of the screen.
Be the host to get the most
“We are hosting our own events, as opposed to joining a collective career fair,” said Belen. “That way, we get job seekers who have already been informed and done their research. They know they are coming to a Consumers opportunity and they are more familiar with our company. It lends itself to better conversations. Candidates have specific questions and there are things we can respond to immediately, or direct them to somebody who can respond on the spot, I think that really weeds out the passive and the just curious, versus the really interested job seekers.”

Save your data, save time
“Every time you go into a new event, even if it’s using the same platform, you have to recreate your entire booth,” said Metzler. “So save it – your job overview, pictures you want to include, all the static information that does not change. Make sure you have all of that in a file. It will expedite things when you have to set up your next booth.”

The future is now
Energy companies say they’ll continue to hold online events, long after in-person encounters become safe again.
“This is a trend,” said Rochelle Tabor, Senior Human Resources Consultant at Consumers Energy. “A lot of organizations are going this way. It allows you to reach a lot of candidates in a short period of time. It eliminates travel time for employers and time away from work. There’s no dress code. Candidates can look at company information at their leisure prior to event so they are more informed.”
“We don’t know when COVID-19 is going to end but afterward, this is still something we’ll be doing.” ▲
We all know there is a shortage of workers in our industry. And lots of people have developed some great materials to help our industry attract new people. The problem is, there’s so much stuff out there, many of you don’t know where to start. That’s where we come in. We’ve gathered material from great resources like the Mike Rowe Works Foundation, Jason Dorsey, the Center for Workforce Development, SkillsUSA, Helmets To Hardhats, Troops To Energy, and more . . . and put them all in one place and organized, so it’s easier for you to find what you need and actually use those materials to attract new hires. So what are you waiting for? Let’s Get To Work!

Check out our new workforce development site and the resources available: www.dcaletsgettowork.com.
Industry News

About 8,000 Union Jobs Expected To Be Created With Pipeline Announcement
TC Energy Corp. announced recently that it has awarded more than $1.6 billion worth of contracts to six major American union contractors to execute pipeline construction across 800 miles in three states – including Nebraska.

The work on the Keystone XL pipeline is scheduled to begin in 2021. The other two states are Montana and South Dakota.

The six contractors will be directly responsible for hiring more than 7,000 union workers in 2021, with special emphasis placed on hiring locally first and giving priority to qualified local and indigenous-owned businesses, according to a press release issued October 28th.

When combined with additional 2021 contracts to be announced later, the total number of American union workers constructing Keystone XL in 2021 will exceed 8,000 and $900 million in gross wages. In total, Keystone XL is expected to employ more than 11,000 Americans in 2021, creating more than $1.6 billion in gross wages.

“The awarding of 2021 U.S. construction contracts shows the continued momentum behind Keystone XL. The dedicated members of the operating engineers are eager and ready to build this critical piece of modern North American energy infrastructure to the highest quality standards,” said James T. Callahan, general president of the International Union of Operating Engineers. “The 8,000 American union jobs that come with 2021 construction is welcome news and irreplaceable as the U.S. continues our economic recovery.”

The companies awarded contracts include Michels Corp. of Brownsville, Wisconsin; Precision Pipeline of Eau Claire, Wisconsin and Price Gregory International of Katy, Texas.

“With construction activities well underway in both the U.S. and Canada, Keystone XL is already playing a critical role in contributing to North America’s economic recovery,” said Richard Prior, president of Keystone XL Pipeline. “The selection of our U.S. construction contractors for 2021 is an important next step in employing thousands more American union workers and delivering tangible benefits to local communities and businesses.”

These contractors have extensive experience constructing pipeline and major infrastructure projects in the U.S. and around the world. The contractors were chosen based on TC Energy’s core principles of safety, environmental stewardship and stakeholder engagement along with their financial strength, technical design expertise and contract competitiveness.

Keystone XL said in the release that it remains committed as ever to meeting today’s economic and energy security needs. The project has announced several significant developments in recent months, including commencing construction and signing the government of Alberta as an equity partner, signing a project labor agreement with four major American unions and creating a $10 million Green Jobs Training Fund, and offering equity ownership to Indigenous communities across North America.

This is in addition to more than $90 million being recorded in the U.S. to date in spending through TC Energy and the company’s various contractors and suppliers.
Biden Plan Calls for Major Changes to Energy Policy

Following a chaotic and intense presidential election, former vice president Joe Biden was unofficially declared the winner and may become the 46th President of the United States in January of 2021. While President Trump continues to fight apparent election irregularities with planned legal challenges at the time this article was written, the Biden team was already planning for the transition of power. Biden’s win was much narrower than most observers predicted, and at press time, Republicans appeared in a strong position to retain control of the Senate and made some headway in the House where they enjoyed several unexpected victories.

The apparent president-elect has laid out an ambitious energy plan, which includes a wide range of key elements for a “Clean Energy Revolution and Environmental Justice,” many of which may impact the natural gas distribution construction industry. These elements include:

• Taking quick executive action to reverse many of the Trump executive actions related to energy policy, including reinstating Obama-era policies such as like methane limits on oil and gas operations, requiring all new light- and medium-duty vehicles to be zero emission vehicles, and enacting new restrictions on oil and gas leases on public lands and waters

• Making infrastructure investments to ensure that buildings, water, transportation, and energy infrastructure can withstand the impacts of climate change

• Working with Congress to enact legislation that puts the nation on an irreversible path to achieve economy-wide net-zero emissions no later than 2050, and requiring “polluters to bear the full cost of the carbon pollution they are emitting”

• Rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement and participating in a world climate summit to reposition the U.S. as a leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions

• Committing major investments in clean energy and innovation, including $400 billion over ten years in clean energy initiatives

• Accelerating the deployment of “clean technology” throughout the American economy, focusing on household and industrial emissions and pushing the agricultural sector to net-zero emissions

• Making environmental justice a priority across all federal agencies by addressing what is considered by the Biden team a disproportionate impact of climate change and air pollution on “communities of color, tribal lands, and low-income communities"
• Holding polluters accountable by requiring publicly-traded companies to disclose climate-related financial risks to shareholders
• Creating 10 million good-paying, middle-class, union jobs that are associated with efforts to “prevent, reduce, and withstand the impacts of this climate crisis”
• Fulfilling what Biden considers an obligation to the communities and workers in the fossil fuels industries, whose jobs will be threatened as the U.S. moves toward 100% clean energy

This plan is overall a pretty stark change from the direction we have taken the past four years. While it includes some of the framework to the Green New Deal, many of Biden’s policy proposals have been popular. However, it is expected that many progressives will be advocating for many other Green New Deal policies.

As president-elect Biden was closing in on an Electoral College victory, energy executives were already weighing in on the potential impact of a president who clearly supports shifting away from fossil fuels. Natural gas and oil suppliers are preparing to be impacted more than several other utilities. In fact, some industry executives predict that a Biden Administration may move quickly on some high-profile issues, such as prohibiting drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, shutting down controversial pipeline projects such as the Dakota Access Pipeline and barring fracking operations on areas overseen by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

The impacts on pipeline companies may be mixed. While Biden is likely to make it harder to get permits for new projects, those who already have extensive pipeline networks and access to major oil and gas basins stand to gain, according to some industry experts. The election will likely have less impact on utilities. While President Donald Trump has been rolling back environmental protections to aid fossil fuel companies, the changes aren’t having much impact on the market forces driving power providers toward clean energy.

The rise of renewables will continue regardless of who wins the presidential race, according to many industry executives. “No matter who wins, Biden or Trump, we see the United States as a growth market for renewables,” one executive said in an interview. “The market has spoken and consumers want it.”

Obviously, the transition to renewable energy is in the works, but DCA will continue to work furiously to defend the natural gas industry from overzealous attacks from so-called “environmentalists” and other opponents of natural gas pipelines, which are widely considered the safest way to transport cost-effective and clean-burning natural gas.

Key Senate and House Committees See Minor Changes in Personnel, Agenda
While DCA will be watching closely as the Biden cabinet is put together, we’re also looking at what the 117th Congress means in terms of key committees in both the House and Senate. Here’s a preview of what’s in store when the new Congress is gavelled in January.

**Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee:** The Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee will likely focus on transportation and consumer privacy issues next year. Committee Chairman Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) are expected to stay on next year, and both have said they want to move a national privacy bill. Wicker has also said he’d like to focus on liability issues related to the “big tech” industry, while Cantwell has showed an interest in advancing aircraft safety. Of particular interest to DCA, this committee will have to consider a new pipeline safety bill if Congress is unable to pass a final bill in the “lame duck” session before the 116th Congress adjourns at the end of the year.

**Senate Energy and Natural Resources (ENR) Committee:** Next year, the ENR Committee is expected to be led by Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), who is expected to try to advance energy innovation while ensuring access to affordable, reliable power. Barrasso has supported an “all-of-the above” strategy on energy, with a focus on helping the energy sector recover from the ongoing pandemic. Current Chair Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) is required to step down under the Republican’s six-year term limit on committee leadership. Democrats on the ENR Committee, led by Joe Manchin (D-WV) is expected to push for environmental stewardship while providing a balance for an economy that still depends on fossil fuels.

**Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee:** A big change is in store for the EPW Committee, which plays a key role in moving surface transportation and water infrastructure legislation. Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), who calls a multi-year highway bill “probably my top priority,” is in line to take the gavel as chair of the full committee. Meanwhile, Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.), who has led Democratic efforts to advance environmental and climate action in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, is expected to be the committee’s top Democrat in the 117th Congress.

**House Energy and Commerce Committee:** Democrats serving on the House Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee are expected to push a similar agenda next year, including advancing environmental protection and promoting renewable energy. Chairman Frank Pallone Jr. (D-NJ) has indicated that he plans to formally introduce climate legislation that aims to achieve a 100% clean economy by 2050. While this is part of President-Elect Biden’s energy platform, some progressives are already complaining that would not go far enough.

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The E&C Committee’s agenda will also seek to improve energy access, affordability, and reliability, which are considered critical to the country’s recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and to parts of the country that continue to suffer severe natural disasters.

The retirement of Rep. Greg Walden (R-Ore.), the longtime full committee ranking member has attracted a three-way race to replace him. Reps. Michael Burgess (R-Texas), Bob Latta (R-Ohio), and Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.) all are vying for the top Republican spot on the panel. Meanwhile, the ranking member slot on the Environment and Climate Change Subcommittee will be open after Rep. John Shimkus (R-Ill.) retires at the end of the 116th Congress. The next most-senior Republicans on the panel are McMorris Rodgers and Rep. David McKinley (R-W.V.)

House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee:
Current chairman of the House T&I Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) has reiterated his goal of reauthorizing surface transportation programs, including $500 billion towards highway, transit, and rail infrastructure improvements. As always, the main challenge is how to pay for these badly-needed projects. DeFazio has supported policy that would aid the Highway Trust Fund by increasing the gas tax by as much as 1.5 cents per gallon each year. This concept is hardly a new one, but the concept of a gas tax hike continues to be a political lightning rod.

House Ways & Means Committee:
House Ways and Means Chairman Richard Neal (D-Mass.) is expected to retain his spot atop the House tax-writing panel, where his current priorities include expanding the earned income tax credit and the child tax credit. Ranking member Kevin Brady (R-Texas) is also expected to remain the top Republican on Ways & Means, where he will continue his attempts to make permanent key perks of the 2017 tax law, such as full expensing, which begins phasing out after 2022. Brady is also open to negotiating tax relief measures for working families and small business who continue to struggle with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Hard-Left Progressives Called Out Over Election Results
While the vote tallying wasn’t concluded at press time, Democrats were fully expected to maintain control of the House, despite a strong showing by Republican candidates in several House races. Increasing arguments over which part of the party is to blame were getting considerable attention, where moderate Democrats blamed a range of progressives’ priorities, from banning fracking to defunding the police. Meanwhile, members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus defended liberal ideas, saying that’s what keeps the Democratic base motivated to turn out and vote.

Moderate Democrats are arguing that, in order to regain control of the Senate in 2022, those considered for heading the Department of Interior, Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Energy should be centrists or at least only moderately progressive. Depending on who is nominated, the confirmation process run by a Republican-controlled senate could be problematic, to say the least.

FERC’s Chatterjee replaced as Chairman
This month the Trump administration removed Republican Neil Chatterjee as chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), replacing him with fellow GOP commissioner James Danly. The change followed a statement by Chatterjee encouraging power grid operators to incorporate state carbon pricing policies in their markets. Many believe this was in retaliation by the Trump Administration, which continues to encourage FERC to help implement a pro-fossil fuel agenda. FERC is an independent body that regulates interstate transmission of electricity and reviews energy infrastructure projects, including those related to interstate pipeline systems.

Chatterjee, previously an energy adviser for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, has become a proponent of addressing climate change. “I have obviously been out there promoting a conservative, market-based approach to carbon mitigation and sending signals the commission is open to considering a carbon price, and perhaps that led to this,” Chatterjee said. “Quite frankly, if, in fact, this was retribution for my independence, I am quite proud of that.”

Chatterjee, who will stay on as a commissioner through the end of his term in June 2021, says he is on great terms with Danly, adding that they “obviously have differences of opinion in some areas” but he looks forward to working with him as Chatterjee remains “focused on advancing the policy initiatives I am quite proud of and protecting my legacy.”

Chatterjee took over as FERC chairman after the death of Commissioner Kevin McIntyre, and he sometimes strayed from the Trump administration’s proposals. Under Chatterjee, FERC approved an order to allow energy storage, including batteries, to access wholesale markets and supporting a FERC Order that enables certain energy resources to tap into those same markets. Some see this as a positive move that will provide for increased cash flow toward fast-growing technologies. Chatterjee also issued a proposed policy statement that the commission would be open to allowing carbon pricing in the nation’s power markets.

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Calendar

DCA & Industry Events

2021

MARCH 2-6
DCA 60th Annual Convention
Fairmont Scottsdale Princess
Scottsdale, Arizona
www.dcaweb.org

MARCH 23-25
Global Excavation Safety Conference
Tampa, Florida
www.globalexcavationsafetyconference.com

MARCH 29-31
DCA Safety Congress
Hyatt Regency Austin
Austin, Texas
www.dcaweb.org

APRIL 5-7
DCA & AGA Utility Workshop
The Ritz-Carlton - Chicago
Chicago, Illinois
www.dcaweb.org

APRIL 6-10
Pipe Line Contractors Association (PLCA) Annual Convention
Grand Hyatt Baha Mar
Nassau, New Providence Bahamas
www.plca.org

MAY 16-20
Pipe Line Contractors Association of Canada (PLCAC) 67th Annual Convention
Fairmont Empress
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
www.pipeline.ca

MAY 18-20
Underground Construction Technology International Conference & Exhibition (UCT)
Music City Center
Nashville, Tennessee
www.uctonline.com

JULY 21-24
DCA Mid Year Meeting
Fairmont Chateau Whistler
Whistler, British Columbia, Canada
www.dcaweb.org

SEPTEMBER 13-17
International Pipe Line & Offshore Contractors Association (IPLOCA) 2021 Convention
Prague, Czech Republic
www.iploca.com

SEPTEMBER 28-30
International Construction & Utility Equipment Exposition (ICUEE)
Kentucky Exposition Center
Louisville, Kentucky
www.icuee.com

ATTENTION ALL DCA MEMBERS!
So you do not miss out on future meeting and event notices, please have your company’s IT representative whitelist all emails from dcaweb.org. If you have any questions, please contact Teri Korson at tkorson@dcaweb.org.
Doug Banning’s Legacy of Safety Earns Him 2020 Pipeline Leadership Award

There are two principles that Doug Banning has held fast to in his 35-year career in the oil and gas pipeline and distribution industry: prioritizing safety and surrounding himself with good people.

Those two tenets formed the foundation for an impressive number of achievements that have led North American Oil & Gas Pipelines to present the 2020 Pipeline Leadership Award to the recently retired CEO of MVerge, the parent company of Miller Pipeline and Minnesota Limited.

Banning has led the growth and transformation of Miller Pipeline, and subsequently MVerge, through people, process, and practice. He presided over the successful integration of 10 acquisitions that supported growth and development of the company. He led innovative efforts around productivity tracking and performance improvement both for Miller’s crews and for local distribution company (LDC) customers.

In addition to driving transformation at Miller Pipeline and MVerge, Banning’s contributions to the industry are extensive, including his work with DCA.

Banning was a leading force in transforming the DCA Strategic Planning Committee. He helped drive the association’s efforts to address workforce development and, as leader of the Membership/Marketing Committee, helped the industry achieve a higher level of professionalism in the execution of gas distribution construction through attracting new members to the DCA.

Additionally, Banning collaborated with and supported a unionized labor workforce nationally by serving as a trustee for the Labor-Management Cooperation Trust, as well as locally through serving as a management trustee for the Indiana Laborers Health and Welfare Fund.

One of Banning’s biggest achievements was in prioritizing a culture of safety — before it was popular and expected. As a pioneer in this respect, Banning helped spread the gospel of safety throughout the pipeline industry, and it’s one of the things he is most proud of in his career.

“As a company, we pushed a process to make safety personal,” he said. “Our campaign ‘What I Live For’ highlighted how safety impacts family members and the important people in our lives, and that really made a difference in our safety culture. Making that connection was important in sustaining our safety culture.”

Banning got his start in the pipeline industry right out of college. He graduated from the University of North Alabama in 1985 with an accounting degree and returned to Indianapolis looking for a job. Miller Pipeline was hiring.

From the accounting department, Banning rose through the ranks at Miller Pipeline, learning directly from the company founder Don Miller and his brother Dale Miller.

Dale Anderson, president and chief operating officer of Miller Pipeline, worked with Banning for nearly 12 years. Anderson described Banning’s leadership style as “open-minded,” with an emphasis on teamwork.

Anderson believes Banning deserves the Pipeline Leadership Award because of his ability to “elevate those around him” for the betterment of the industry.

“He has without a doubt helped to heighten awareness of the many opportunities in the gas utility market,” Anderson said. “His willingness to invest in his employees drove the amazing growth Miller experienced over the last 25-30 years. He proved time and time again that investing in his employees would be the driver to our success.”

Founded in 1953, Miller Pipeline has grown to become one of the largest gas distribution contractors in the United States. Banning was promoted to CEO in 1998. Over the course of his tenure, Banning helped propel
Miller Pipeline from a company of 350 employees with revenues of $40 million to more than 5,000 employees with revenues exceeding $1.3 billion.

As part of that growth, Banning steered the company through a number of changes.

In 2006, Miller Pipeline was acquired by Vectren Corp., which in 2011 acquired Minnesota Limited – one of the largest transmission pipeline contractors in the United States. The two companies were then brought together as MVerge.

Vectren was acquired by the utility company CenterPoint Energy in 2018, which then sold MVerge to Artera Services – previously named PowerTeam Services – in February this year. Banning announced his retirement in July, though he remains on the board of directors of Artera.

Doosan introduces updated mini excavators with enhanced performance and productivity

Doosan Infracore North America, LLC, introduces the new DX42-5K and the DX50-5K mini excavators. The excavators are updates to the prior iterations, featuring new innovations to increase machine performance, versatility, operator comfort and reliability.

The Doosan® DX42-5K and DX50-5K mini excavators demonstrate the company’s continued dedication to innovation. These models in the 4- to 5-metric-ton size class serve customers in various industries. The excavators’ compact size and mobility make them valuable for commercial and residential developments and landscape projects. In addition, the machines’ versatility makes them perfect for utility companies that perform underground construction tasks.

Performance

A new dual-flange track roller system works in tandem with an enhanced counterweight for better over-the-side digging and lifting capabilities. An integrated lift eye allows for easier craning and lifting. Operators now have the option to remove the bucket when lifting to maximize capacity with the new secure lifting point. The new DX42-5K and DX50-5K excavators have a high-performing 3-cylinder Doosan diesel engine that is more fuel-efficient. Four new tie-downs – for a total of six – provide extra security during transport. For additional dig depth and reach, a long-arm option is available for the DX42-5K and DX50-5K.

Versatility

The versatility of these mini excavators makes them a great tool for many jobs. The dozer blade’s top edge features a more durable design for added strength. The blade and frame are also designed with an angled top and rounded edges to keep material from building up on the blade and improve debris shedding. An angle blade remains an option for both models.

Easy-to-reach auxiliary hydraulic couplers are now located on the mini excavator’s arm. The repositioned couplers help reduce the time needed for operators to connect the hydraulic hoses. In addition, a new clamp diverter valve option allows operators to quickly connect another attachment without disconnecting the hydraulic clamp hoses.

Comfort

The mini excavators are standard from the factory with an enclosed, air-conditioned cab. Taller and wider windows offer better visibility, and foldable pedals offer more operator foot room. The ergonomic design also includes wider seats, responsive joystick controls, and new joystick buttons to provide additional hands-on control functions. An optional canopy is available for customers who prefer an open operating station.

Operators can monitor and troubleshoot with additional easily available data on the 5-inch display panel. These models are available with an optional integrated rearview camera for enhanced all-around visibility.

Durability

The new Doosan DX42-5K and DX50-5K mini excavators are designed with modifications to improve machine durability. For example, the mini excavator’s panels come together for a tighter and better fit.

The new DX42-5K and DX50-5K excavators are part of a family of mini excavators. Doosan offers six models in its mini excavator lineup – from the DX35-5 to the DX85R-3 – to serve customers with a variety of size classes and machine capabilities. The six Doosan mini excavators complement the company’s larger crawler excavator models, offering a full line of excavating equipment.

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Artera completes purchase of Wellsville’s Otis Eastern

Artera Services, LLC, one of the nation’s industry-leading providers of integrated infrastructure services to the natural gas and electric industries, has completed the previously announced acquisition of Otis Eastern Service, LLC, the company announced.

“I am pleased to welcome Otis Eastern to the Artera family. Their rich history and foundation of the business fit perfectly with our culture and values at Artera,” stated Brian Palmer, CEO of Artera. “We are looking forward to this next step in the future of our companies.”

Otis Eastern has been in operation since 1936 as a contractor of pipelines for midstream and utility companies throughout the Northeast and Appalachian regions.

Otis Eastern features a workforce of about 600 employees and serves customers in seven states, with
Welcome New Associate Members

Datch
44 Tehama St.
San Francisco, CA  94555
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Website: www.datch.io

Mark Fosdike, Chief Executive Officer, mark@datch.io
Junaid Faruq, Head of Strategy & Business Development, junaid@datch.io

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Phone: (515) 706-2500
Website: vermeerioia.com

Rick Boat, Chief Executive Officer/President
Duke Reynolds, Vice President – Sales/Finance
Brian Koonce, Vice President – Operations,
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Brad Croaat, Key Accounts/Marketing Manager,
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a rich history of three generations of the Joyce family leading the company. President and CEO Casey Joyce said the time was right for Otis Eastern to make the move, which is targeted at strengthening the operation long-term.

“The combination helps extend our path of success in this industry and will provide enhanced career opportunities for our employees while maintaining our loyalty to our business and customers,” said Joyce. “I am thrilled about our next chapter with Artera.”

Otis Eastern will maintain its headquarters in Wellsville on Andover Road.

Artera, headquartered in Atlanta, Ga., is a $2 billion in revenue industry-leading provider of integrated infrastructure services to the natural gas and electric industries across 34 states. Artera employs more than 9,000 people throughout the United States and focuses on maintenance, replacement, and upgrade of existing infrastructure.

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New Scholarship Celebrates Westphal’s Legacy

Michels Corporation is celebrating the legacy of the late Robert H. Westphal by establishing the Robert H. Westphal Memorial Scholarship. This prestigious scholarship will be awarded through the Michels Corporation Scholarship Fund, Inc.

Bob devoted 55 years of his life to Michels, tirelessly pushing the company’s performance, and the pipeline and trenchless construction industries’ potential to higher levels. He passed away on Tuesday, March 31, 2020. Throughout his career, Bob never missed an opportunity to learn and teach others about new advancements and technologies.

“What made Bob an iconic statesman was more than what he knew, it was what he taught others,” said Pat Michels, President and CEO, Michels Corporation. “My family and I believe one of the best ways to celebrate Bob’s legacy is by encouraging others to pursue lifelong learning with the same zeal as he did.”

The inaugural Robert H. Westphal Memorial Scholarship will be awarded for the 2021-2022 school year. Like the Michels Scholarship Fund’s annual awards, this scholarship will be given to a Michels employee, or a spouse or dependent of an employee, who is pursuing continuing education at a university, technical college, or trade and technical skills program. The recipient will be selected based on attributes shared by Bob.

To contribute, please make checks payable to Michels Scholarship Fund, Attn: Nate Redig, P.O. Box 128, Brownsville, WI 53006. Enter Robert H. Westphal Memorial on the memo line.

The Michels Scholarship Fund is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.
The Datch vision is to build a universal voice-visual intelligence platform for the frontline workforce.

The Datch mission is to deliver a platform which enables frontline workers to capture and interact with knowledge in the most seamless and natural way, creating a rich, structured dataset for their organizations.

The Datch purpose is to inspire the sharing of frontline knowledge while transforming workers into "super communicators".

Ditch Witch Mid-States
www.ditchwitchmidstates.com

Ditch Witch Mid-States is an underground equipment company, dedicated to serving those that locate, install & remediate pipe & cable underground. Their mission to help customers succeed through specialized support, operational excellence & customer service under the Ditch Witch Mid-States name.

The company is moving its Lexington, Kentucky service center to a larger, newer facility near Erlanger, Kentucky. The new location will have the capacity to repair the largest equipment manufactured by Ditch Witch.