

NIA | News

THE OFFICIAL NEWS PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL INSULATION ASSOCIATION® (NIA)
REPRESENTING THE MECHANICAL AND SPECIALTY INSULATION INDUSTRY

ISSUE 4 2024, VOL. 31

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Fall Summit 
EDUCATE | ENGAGE | ELEVATE / 2024

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NIA | National Insulation Association®

EVP/CEO MESSAGE

Celebrating Progress and Potential



What an incredible year 2024 has been, and the excitement for 2025 is building!

I want to extend my gratitude to everyone who joined us at NIA's Fall Summit in October. We truly embodied NIA President Jack Bittner's theme of **Strength in Numbers** with an impressive turnout of 145 attendees, including 27 first-time participants! I invite you to turn to page 11 for a photo gallery and session highlights that showcase the remarkable achievements and insights shared during our committee sessions and two keynote presentations.

For the second consecutive year, Fall Summit attendees had the opportunity to vote in NIA's Insulation Project Art Gallery Showcase and Competition. Congratulations to Insul-Tech, Inc. for its 1st place win! Additional project details will be featured in upcoming issues of *Insulation Outlook*. During the Summit, attendees also got an exclusive first look at our newly adopted 2024–2027 Strategic Objectives and refreshed mission statement. Turn to page 6 to learn more about our goals and how you can get involved.

We are also pleased to share an update on Insulation Standards and welcome two familiar industry experts as NIA Consultants: Jeff DeGraaf and Kenny Freeman. Check out page 17 to learn more about the exciting projects they will be involved in.

The work we have done on updating specifications and including value to our industry is already showing results in the fact that we are seeing an increasing requirement for contractors to have Certified Thermal Insulation Inspectors on their payroll, particularly in data centers and LNG projects. This adds value to your bid and an added level of knowledge that will separate you from the pack. I strongly encourage you to get your team certified soon. Page 21 provides details on upcoming certification-level courses, available both in-person and virtually.

Another way to add knowledge and value to your team is through NIA's Education Center. At the close of this year we celebrate our second full year, having firmly established our on-demand platform as the premier resource for industry training. Exciting news: a new technical resources track is launching in early

continued on next page

NIA LEADERSHIP

Executive Leadership

President

Jack Bittner, *Johns Manville*

President-Elect

Rick Sutphin, *Performance Contracting, Inc.*

Secretary/Treasurer

John Stevens, *JT THORPE*

Assistant Treasurer

Lee Stuckenschmidt, *Systems Undercover, Inc.*

Counsel

Gary Auman, *Auman, Mahan, and Furry*

NIA Executive Vice President/Chief Executive Officer

Michele M. Jones

Board of Directors

Regional Representatives

CSIA—Brian Willett, *Gribbins Insulation Company, Inc.*

ESICA—Rick Baptista, *Irex Contracting Group*

MICA—Matt Hymer, *Midwest Materials Company*

SEICA—Matt Caldwell, *Caldwell Insulation, Inc.*

SWICA—David B. Patrick, *Specialty Products & Insulation*

WICA—Shawn Reichenbach, *Performance Contracting, Inc.*

Associates' Committee Appointee

Louis Walton, *Proto Corp.*

At-Large Representatives

Mellanie Askew, *Coverflex Manufacturing, Inc.*

R. Dean Burows, *DKB, Inc.*

Rob Elsey (Associate), *Cornerstone Sales, Inc.*

John K. Freeman, Jr., *Petrin, LLC*

Russ Huff, *Bay Insulation Systems, Inc.*

Mike McCowan, *L.C. Insulations, Inc.*

Marc Napolitano, *Insulation Materials Corporation*

Jon Perry, *Specialty Products & Insulation*

Past President Advisors

Laura Dover, *Chaparral Insulation*

J. Kenneth Freeman, *Petrin, LLC*

Committee Chairs

2025 Convention Planning

Rick Sutphin, *Performance Contracting, Inc.*

Associates

Louis Walton, *Proto Corp.*

Merit Contractors

Mike McCowan, *L.C. Insulations, Inc.*

Distributors/Fabricators

Brian Blazek, *Specialty Products & Insulation*

Metal Building Laminators

David Tomchak,
Bay Insulation Systems, Inc.

Education and Training

R. Dean Burows, *DKB, Inc.*

Technical Information

Doug Fast, *Owens Corning*

Health and Safety

Mike Hill, *Performance Contracting, Inc.*

Union Contractors

Rick Sutphin, *Performance Contracting, Inc.*

Membership

John Stevens, *JT THORPE*

Young Professional Advisory

John K. Freeman, Jr., *Petrin, LLC*

EVP/CEO Message, continued

2025. Turn to page 20 to explore our latest courses and discover convenient access to on-demand training.

As I watched the snow band and lake effect snow cross the United States this month, I cannot help but look forward to the warmth of next year's convention in sunny Scottsdale, Arizona. Make sure you register early and save the date for NIA's 69th Annual Convention at the Grand Hyatt Scottsdale Resort in Scottsdale, Arizona, April 28–30, 2025. You will experience the resort's stunning complete renovation at exceptional discounted rates. Page 7 offers more information about our planned networking and educational opportunities.

Lastly, I invite you to read Jessica Zahn's insight into work-life balance. I was honored to be her mentor through our Young

Professional Advisory Committee Mentor Program. Turn to page 24 to engage with her thought-provoking questions she developed to guide our discussions—it is the perfect time for some meaningful self-reflection.

I hope to see you in 2025, and I wish you, your team, and your family a wonderful holiday season!



Michele M. Jones
Executive Vice President/Chief Executive Officer

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

In this issue, we are excited to welcome the following new companies. We encourage you to read the information each company has submitted and see if they are potential new business partners for your company. To view new NIA member companies, visit www.insulation.org/newmembers.



September 2024

Associate Supplier

ATP Adhesive Systems AG

Attn: Paul Schwitter

Sihleggstr 23

Wollerau, Switzerland CH-8832

Phone: +41 43 888 15 15

www.atp-ag.com

About ATP Adhesive Systems AG

ATP specializes in the development and manufacturing of client-specific adhesive solutions tailored to meet the unique needs of various industries. Our global distribution network and cutting-edge manufacturing capabilities allow us to supply high-quality adhesive products to sectors such as automotive, transportation, foam, graphics, electronics, plastics, specialty labels, medical, and building and construction. With a commitment to sustainability and innovation, ATP is a trusted partner for the insulation industry, providing long-term, reliable products for applications such as tube closures, panel insulation fixations, and protective films.

Why did you join NIA?

We chose to join NIA because it aligns perfectly with our commitment to advancing the insulation industry through innovation and sustainability. By being part of this network, we hope to collaborate with industry leaders, stay ahead of market trends, and contribute to the development of cutting-edge insulation solutions that meet the highest standards of efficiency and environmental responsibility.

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September 2024

Union Contractor

IITI Group, Inc.

Attn: Ben Antle

3205 W. 76th St.

Davenport, IA 52806

Phone: (563) 391-8100

\$6-10 Million

www.iitigroup.com

Specialties: Acoustic Products/Services, Asbestos Abatement, Building Envelope, Cold Storage, Commercial Insulation, Distribution, HVAC Insulation, Industrial Insulation, Metal Building Lamination, Plumbing Insulation, Power, Refractory Contractor, Refrigeration Insulation, Removable Insulation

About IITI Group

IITI Group is a trusted partner for mechanical systems insulation, asbestos/lead/mold removal, infection control, material sales, and building systems insulation. We proudly offer 24/7 emergency response for abatement projects. With decades of experience, we serve Iowa, Illinois, southern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and northern Missouri.

Why did you join NIA?

We are proud to be a part of NIA and strengthen our industry relationships. We look forward to leveraging NIA's valuable resources to further enhance our trusted and leading services.



October 2024

Associate Manufacturer

American Wire Works

Attn: Phil Fusacchia

3380 Tulip St.

Philadelphia, PA 19134

Phone: (215) 744-6600

www.americanwireworks.com

Specialties: Fastening Systems

About American Wire Works

Founded in 1940, American Wire Works is a leading manufacturer and distributor of high-quality wire, banding, mesh, and fastening products. Known for exceptional service, superior products, and quick turnaround, we are dedicated to delivering reliable, cost-effective solutions that prioritize quality and customer satisfaction across various industries.

Why did you join NIA?

For over 80 years, American Wire Works has partnered with customers to meet the evolving needs of industry. NIA provides a platform for us to engage with cutting-edge industry trends and innovate alongside our customers.



Manufacturers of ELFOAM®

October 2024

Associate Manufacturer

Elliott Company of Indianapolis, Inc.

Attn: Vincent Fuster

9200 Zionsville Rd.

Indianapolis, IN 46268

Phone: (317) 291-1213

www.elliottfoam.com

Specialties: Insulation Board & Block (Rigid/Semi-Rigid)

About Elliott Company of Indianapolis

With more than 65 years of experience and located in the "Crossroads of America," Elliott Company is a manufacturer of polyisocyanurate closed-cell rigid foams (PIR/Polyiso). We serve a diverse range of industries across the United States, Canada, and the Americas, specializing in the production and fabrication of rigid foams tailored to our customers' specifications in the mechanical pipe insulation, composites, and transportation sectors. As a third-generation family business, we remain dedicated to delivering innovative and environmentally responsible rigid foam products that consistently meet the evolving needs of our customers.

Why did you join NIA?

At Elliott Company, we value the relationships we have with the associations we are members of. NIA is the most prestigious association in the mechanical and commercial industries, and our company is honored to be an Associate member of such a great organization. With a well-rounded focus on the latest trends, safety and security, product development/assistance, and advocacy, NIA's involvement is key to the success of our industry, as well as the education of the upcoming generations. We are delighted to be one of the newest members of the National Insulation Association!



NIA WANTS TO PROMOTE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS!

Share your good news, milestones, article and column ideas, new products, and industry photos with NIA by emailing editor@insulation.org.

We love to highlight NIA member companies and your achievements in *NIA News* and *Insulation Outlook*, through articles and columns such as *Contractors' Corner*, *Celebrating Members*, *Product Focus*, *People & Places*, and more!



November 2024

International Affiliate

ADON Solutions Ltd.

Attn: Adrian Lyn

23 Hillary Ave.

Kingston 10, St. Andrew, Jamaica

Phone: (876) 333-1106

www.adonlimited.com

Specialties: Commercial Insulation, Distribution, Firestopping, Industrial Insulation, Paintings/Coatings, Removable Insulation

About ADON Solutions Ltd.

ADON Solutions specializes in high-performance protective coatings and mechanical insulation systems, safeguarding the integrity of commercial and industrial assets while enhancing sustainability. We deliver industry-leading solutions tailored to optimize durability, safety, and energy efficiency through our tailored, innovative systems. Our expertise spans diverse sectors, including agriculture, distribution, food and beverage, health, manufacturing, marine, mining, power, and wind energy. We collaborate closely with clients to address specific operational needs, driving operational reliability, cost efficiency, and long-term performance, even in the most demanding environments.

Why did you join NIA?

ADON seeks to join the NIA to access advanced industry insights and the knowledge center to enhance our offerings. Joining the NIA will allow us to empower our team, better understand the needs of and serve our clients with the most efficient and sustainable insulation solutions.

Do you know of a company that could benefit from becoming a member of NIA?

For more information or to refer a potential member, please call Rianna Gleeson at (703) 464-6422, ext. 113, or email membership@insulation.org.

PEOPLE & PLACES

In the News



With respect and sadness, we share that NIA Past President Robert (Bob) Fults passed away on September 21, 2024. In 1970, he joined Thorpe Insulation Company. He became President in 1972 and subsequently became an important leader in the mechanical insulation industry

He served as the 2002–2003 NIA President and President of the Western Insulation Contractors Association in 1977. He retired from the day-to-day operations of Thorpe in 1997. We are thankful for his years of service to the industry and to NIA. Bob will be honored during NIA's 2025 Annual Convention.

Performance Contracting, Inc.'s Mike Hill Receives Safety Award; PCI Opens New Branch

PCI's Director of National Safety Mike Hill was recently honored with the National Safety Council's (NSC) Distinguished Service to Safety Award at the 2024 NSC Congress and Expo. Mike serves as Chair of NIA's Healthy & Safety Committee. Throughout his career, Mike continues to demonstrate exceptional leadership, overseeing safety for more than 10,000 employees. His dedication to building a strong safety culture is reflected in his leadership of the PCI team to create Safety University, part of PCI's ongoing commitment to safety excellence.

PCI also announced the opening of its newest branch in Boise, Idaho. The Boise branch offers a range of PCI's core product lines, including building and mechanical insulation, scaffolding, and more.

NIA Adopts New Mission Statement and Strategic Objectives

Every 3 years during NIA's July Board of Directors Meeting, a special 2-day Long Range Planning (LRP) session is held to review NIA's activities and goals over the last several years and strategically determine how resources should be allocated to improve the insulation industry to benefit the membership in the future.

These decisions are made by the LRP Committee, which includes members of the NIA staff and volunteers hand-picked by NIA's President.

In July 2024, as part of the LRP session, NIA's Mission Statement was reviewed and discussed to determine how its priorities had evolved over time. The group suggested revisions that emphasize current activities and focus. The new Mission Statement is below.

NIA's mission is to increase the success and professionalism of its insulation industry membership through:

- Strengthening and developing the industry with education, training, and advocacy;
- Promoting and elevating the image and value of the industry;
- Serving as the resource to exchange and communicate industry information; and
- Providing effective industry representation of our membership.

The LRP Committee then developed three new strategic objectives to guide NIA's focus over the next several years by addressing industry challenges, providing benefits and value to its member base, and securing continued financial health for the association. Members of the LRP Committee break into teams by choosing the Strategic Objective (SO) they want to help achieve. These teams discuss the current state of the industry and how to achieve their new SO, develop a Tactical Plan (TP) with Action Items (AI), and choose leaders to be responsible for fulfilling these SO, TP, and AIs with the SO leader reporting to the Board of Directors at each future Board meeting. In a special meeting in September, the NIA Board of Directors approved the new Mission Statement and the 2024–2027 SOs developed by these teams.

NIA would like to thank the LRP Committee members for their insights and dedication to the industry. All member company employees are welcome to participate and be a part of accomplishing the strategic objectives outlined below. To find out more about how to get involved, email membership@insulation.org.

Visit www.insulation.org/about-nia/lrphistory to view the history of NIA's strategic objectives, tactical plans, action items, and results from 2011.

2024–2027 Strategic Objectives

1

Carbon/Emission Reduction

Elevate the Decarbonization Benefits of Mechanical Insulation



Partnerships

Develop Strategic Relationships with Stakeholders That Align with and Support NIA's Mission and Core Values

2

3

Education

Utilize Education to Elevate the Professionalism of the Industry



Industry Leaders Will Be in Scottsdale Next Spring—

Make Sure You Are There, Too!

NIA's 69th Annual Convention

April 28–30, 2025

**Grand Hyatt
 Scottsdale Resort
 Scottsdale, Arizona**

Key Dates and Deadlines

April 4, 2025: Advanced Registration, Hotel Reservation, and Golf Tournament Deadlines

April 14, 2025: Regular Registration Closes

Don't let another year slip by without investing in your professional growth and industry connections! Take action before the end of this year and secure your spot for next year at the best national networking event in the insulation industry, NIA's 69th Annual Convention, happening April 28–30, 2025, at the newly re-imagined Grand Hyatt Scottsdale Resort. Visit www.insulation.org/convention2025 to register, knowing you have your place secured among industry leaders

With President Jack Bittner's powerful theme of *Strength in Numbers*, this Annual Convention is your opportunity to expand your professional network, gain cutting-edge insights, and position yourself at the forefront of industry innovation. Plan to stay for the week to find adventure in the beautiful desert landscape or relax and recharge in Scottsdale, which offers something for everyone.

WHEN MAKING YOUR PLAN, TAKE NOTE OF SCHEDULE UPDATES FOR 2025

- The schedule has shifted to run Monday (April 28) to Wednesday (April 30) for most attendees (Past Presidents' and Board of Directors' events take place Saturday, April 26, and Sunday, April 27). We suggest first-timers and new members arrive Sunday evening for Monday's morning events. Most other attendees can plan to arrive Monday morning, ready for Monday's evening events.
- NIA's Golf Tournament has moved to Monday at 1:00 p.m. local time.

- Welcome events for first-time attendees and new members get started on Monday morning, with the First-Timers Happy Hour on Monday evening.
- An Educational Session and Lunch has been added to the schedule on Wednesday after the committee meetings. During this session, we will also announce the recipients of the Premier Industry Manufacturer Awards.
- The Welcome and Appreciation Dinner takes place on Monday at 6:30 p.m. The theme is Desert Denim under the Stars—boots and denim Western attire is welcome and encouraged (but not required, of course!).





Promote Your Brand at the Premier Insulation Industry Event

Be a part of the industry's top event of the year as NIA brings the best in entertainment, educational sessions, and networking opportunities for all attendees. From Contractor Recognition Packages to Website Sponsorship and Digital Packages, there is an option for every budget.



NATIONAL NETWORKING EACH DAY

- **NIA's Golf Tournament:** Gather your industry colleagues and friends for an afternoon of networking and friendly competition on Monday! Pre-registration is required, and the per-player fee of \$485 includes all tournament costs.
- The **Welcome and Appreciation Dinner** takes place on Monday at 6:30 p.m. The theme is Desert Denim under the Stars—boots and denim Western attire is welcome and encouraged (but not required, of course!).
- On Tuesday, don't miss the **Networking Breakfast** and Safety Excellence Award announcements. Enjoy the **Open Evening** to meet with clients and explore Scottsdale.
- The **Farewell Reception and Dinner** is on Wednesday evening, when we will celebrate our **Strength in Numbers** and NIA President Jack Bittner. The manufacturers' **Hosted Dessert Hospitality Suites** will take place directly after dinner.

TARGETED INDUSTRY KEYNOTE PRESENTATION AND EDUCATION SESSIONS

- The Keynote Speaker is Jeremy Poincenot, who will guide attendees to find the power of interdependence in their lives. Jeremy shares his personal story as a World Blind Golf Champion to inspire everyone to take control of their lives and turn trauma into triumph.
- Back by popular demand is Economist Chris Kuehl. He knows which trends are important to the insulation industry and will share what to expect for 2025 and beyond, with a bit of humor along the way.
- The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in construction is a trending topic, and NIA has secured two experts—Pasha Amelia, Ph.D., P.E., Managing Director, Ankura, and

Kellen Shearin, Associate, Littler Mendelson P.C.—to examine the legal, safety, and project management AI tools that will impact your business.

- An Educational Session and Lunch has been added to the schedule on Wednesday after the committee meetings. During this session, we will also announce the recipients of the Premier Industry Manufacturer Awards.

More sessions and educational topics will be added in the coming months, so stay tuned to NIA News and check out the Convention website, where you can find all the latest information.

SPECIAL EVENTS FOR FIRST-TIME CONVENTION ATTENDEES

- **New and First-Time Member Orientation:** On Monday, join NIA’s Membership Committee and NIA staff for a focused, informational session to help you learn how to make the most of your time at Convention and your NIA membership year-round.
- **First-Timers Happy Hour:** If this is your first NIA Convention, be sure to RSVP to this invitation-only cocktail reception on Monday evening at 6:00 p.m., where you will have the opportunity to network with NIA leadership and industry leaders, and enjoy getting to know fellow members of NIA.



GUESTS AND FAMILIES WELCOME!

Consider registering your family, spouse, or guests. Typically, about 40% of attendees bring someone along. The Schedule of Events (see p. 10) indicates events that are family friendly and those where spouses are encouraged to attend. Children 5 and younger are free, and discounted registration rates are available for kids under 18. All guests must be registered to attend and participate in the Convention functions. (Note: If your spouse or guest would like to receive Convention attendee emails specifically for guests, please send the guest’s email address to events@insulation.org.)

When registering as a spouse/guest, make sure to check the box for the Spouse/Guest Program where guests will enjoy a salsa-making experience. This event is included in your guest registration, and pre-registration is required as space is limited.

Additional online resources are available on NIA’s Convention website. Visit www.insulation.org/convention2025 and click on “Scottsdale Area.”

EXPERIENCE THE UPGRADES TO THE GRAND HYATT

Be among the first to experience the Grand Hyatt Scottsdale Resort, which has been transformed with a \$110 million renovation to create an even more vibrant and elevated experience for guests. The resort, which is surrounded by the majestic McDowell Mountains and stunning landscapes, is enhancing all guest rooms and suites, the pool complex, dining outlets, event space, and more.

NIA has blocked rooms at a discounted rate of \$399 per night, plus state and local taxes. The hotel service fee has been reduced to \$30 per room per day (compared to \$45). These rooms are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Take advantage of NIA’s discounted rate by making your reservation before April 4, 2025. NIA’s discounted room block will sell out—make your reservation early! Access NIA’s room block from April 22 to May 6 by visiting <https://tinyurl.com/2fk3rbtr> or NIA’s Convention website

For more information, visit www.insulation.org/convention2025, or email events@insulation.org.



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

+ Spouses Encouraged to Attend

* Family Friendly, Kids Welcome



SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 2025

5:00 – 8:00 p.m. Past Presidents Reception and Dinner (closed meeting)

11:45 a.m. – 1:45 p.m. Young Professional Advisory Committee (YPAC) and Lunch (open to members under 40 years of age or new to the industry)

SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 2025

(all events on Sunday are closed meetings)

9:30 – 11:00 a.m. Past Presidents Advisory Council

11:45 a.m. – 1:45 p.m. Foundation Board of Directors Meeting and Lunch (closed meeting)

12:00 – 3:00 p.m. Executive Committee Meeting and Lunch

11:45 a.m. – 1:45 p.m. Open Time for Networking Lunch (on your own)

3:00 – 5:30 p.m. Board of Directors Meeting

1:45 – 3:45 p.m. Technical Information Session

5:45 – 6:30 p.m. Board of Directors and Spouse Reception

1:45 – 3:45 p.m. Health and Safety Session

1:45 – 3:15 p.m. Regional/National Committee (closed meeting)

3:15 – 4:45 p.m. CAN/AM Meeting (closed meeting) (open to all Canadian Convention attendees)

MONDAY, APRIL 28, 2025

7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Registration

4:00 – 9:00 p.m. Open Time for Supplier Meetings/ Dinners

8:00 – 10:00 a.m. Education and Training Committee and Breakfast (closed meeting)

8:00 – 10:00 a.m. Membership Committee and Breakfast (closed meeting)

10:15 – 11:00 a.m. New & First-Time Member Orientation (closed meeting)

11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Open time for Networking/Customer Meetings

1:00 – 6:00 p.m. NIA's Golf Tournament+ (separate registration is required)

6:00 – 6:30 p.m. First-Timers Happy Hour (closed meeting)

6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Welcome and Appreciation Dinner*+

TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2025

7:00 a.m. – 4:45 p.m. Registration

7:00 – 8:00 a.m. Networking Breakfast*+

8:00 – 10:00 a.m. Welcome General Session*+

- Business Session
- Safety Awards Presentation

10:00 – 10:15 a.m. Break

10:00 – 11:30 a.m. Spouse/Guest Program+

10:15 – 11:30 a.m. Education Session: AI Innovations for the Construction Industry

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 2025

7:15 a.m. – 1:45 p.m. Registration

7:30 – 8:30 a.m. Networking Breakfast*+

8:30 – 10:15 a.m. General Session: 2025 Economic Outlook*+

10:15 – 12:00 a.m. Break

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Union Contractors Subcommittee (Open only to Signatory contractors of the International)

10:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Merit Contractors Session

10:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Associates (Manufacturer) Session

10:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Distributors/Fabricators Session

10:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Metal Building Laminators Committee

12:00 – 12:30 p.m. Union Contractors Session

12:30 – 1:45 p.m. Education Session and Lunch

- Premier Industry Manufacturer Awards

2:00 – 3:30 p.m. Council of Committees and Board of Directors Meeting (closed meeting)

2:00 – 5:30 p.m. Open Time for Individual Member Meetings/Networking

5:30 – 7:00 p.m. Farewell Reception & Dinner*+

7:00 – 9:00 p.m. Hosted Dessert Hospitality Suites*+

Industry Leaders Drive Strategic Discussions at Fall Summit 2024

Members explored workforce development, talent retention, and legislative impacts shaping the future of the insulation industry.



Active member engagement and targeted industry discussions defined NIA's Fall Summit at the MGM National Harbor this October 28–29, 2024. Living up to President Jack Bittner's theme ***Strength in Numbers***, attendees drove important conversations across more than 20 hours of collaborative sessions. First-time participants brought fresh perspectives, with 27 new voices joining 118 members who have previously attended. That is a total of 145 attendees from more than 70 companies to create dynamic industry exchanges during industry-specific breakouts and keynote sessions.

The Fall Summit format encouraged deeper interaction, with members actively shaping conversations in industry-focused sessions. Attendee feedback highlighted the value of these peer-to-peer discussions, with 98% rating their experience as excellent or good. During breakouts, members shared innovative solutions to common challenges and forged new professional connections that will strengthen the industry throughout the year ahead.

Back for a second year at Fall Summit, attendees voted in the Second Annual Insulation Project Art Gallery Showcase and Competition, which was suggested by members to highlight the creativity, artistry, and craftsmanship of contractor mechanical and industrial insulation system projects. Congratulations to First Place Winner Insul-Tech, Inc. Turn to page 16 to see more on the competition.

An AMAZING
100%

of attendees surveyed said they would be attending Fall Summit again next year!

Coming Together for Expert Insights

The two keynote presentations addressed industry workforce and legislative topics that are important to NIA members and the entire industry.

Panelists Darice M. Thompson of FMI and Michelle Weakley of Performance Contracting, Inc. joined Moderator Thomas MacKinnon of Armacell began by diving into a topic on everyone's radar: developing and retaining talent. From strategies on creating opportunities to finding talent early to retaining the talent through career paths and training, each component of the talent pipeline was analyzed through the lens of the insulation and construction industries.

The workforce theme also popped up in the afternoon legislative keynote, with the Vogel Group's Stephen Borg and Alex Vogel noting that the labor force will be a topic for the next administration. Presenting just days before the November election, Stephen and Alex used their experience in Washington to not only provide insider insights on the national and key Senate and House races. They also focused on key issues such as the economy, trade, energy, taxes, and the key issue of workforce development.



Jim Ntapolis, Territory Market Development Manager—NE Region, Johns Manville

96%

of respondents rated the Fall Summit as excellent or good



INDUSTRY SECTOR AND COMMITTEE SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

While it is impossible to share all of the details from the meetings, here are the top few highlights from each committee.

Associates

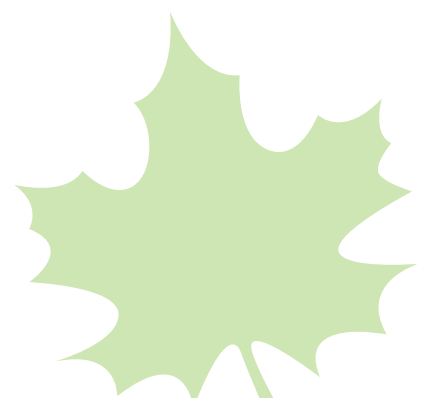
- Received a highly anticipated presentation on carbon credits, exploring the impacts for the insulation industry.
- Held an election for the Associates' Committee Appointee to the NIA Board of Directors.
- Discussed the Premier Industry Manufacturer™ Award, company participation, the value, and how current winners are using the award recognition.

Distributor/Fabricator

- Reviewed their respective pages in the *2024 Buyer's Guide* and discussed adding subcategories for types of products or applications, but ultimately decided to keep the listings as-is.

Insight from a First-Time Attendee

"Overall, attending and participating in my first Fall Summit was a great opportunity for me, being new to my role, to mix and mingle with key industry partners and colleagues as well as hear about industry trends from the keynoters. I especially enjoyed the conversations during the manufacturers' session focused on how we can assist in delivering the message to owners on the cost benefits of properly designed and installed mechanical insulation systems."





91%

of respondents learned new information



98%

of respondents said the program content/education value exceeded or met expectations



- Broke into groups to draft an outline for two new resources: The Value of Distribution and the Differences Between Fabrication and Manufacturing. Members are encouraged to come to the Convention meeting to review the new content.
- Brainstormed about future speaker ideas and useful topics that could benefit their businesses.

Education Committee (met virtually on October 10)

- Heard an update on courses for NIA's Education Center, including The Mechanical Insulation 101 track (launched in September), the Mechanical Insulation Basics course in Spanish, the three Technical Information Committee documents modules, and two health and safety courses.
- Continued the review of modules to organize existing courses by different types of jobs as a new way to market these courses to Premier Training Subscribers' teams.
- Continued to work with organizations to expand the reach of NIA's inspector and appraisal programs, as well as working with TIAC on an agreement for NIA's Education Center.

Health & Safety

- Examined the changing landscape of medical and recreational marijuana in the construction industry with Attorney Langdon Ramsburg.
- Discussed updates for the upcoming Health & Safety Resources website and the value of the two safety handbooks for contractors and distributors/fabricators.
- Received an OSHA update from NIA Legal Counsel Gary Auman.

Membership

- Reviewed the success of the Ambassador Program.
- Discussed plans for the New Member/First-Timer Orientation at the upcoming 2025 Annual Convention, and members volunteered to be session moderators.
- Examined the ongoing and upcoming priorities for the 2024–2025 Dues Task Force.

Merit Contractors

- Discussed regional market conditions, focusing on workforce topics and the outlook for 2025.
- Considered Education Center topics, especially the importance of safety-related courses.
- Heard from NIA Consultants Jeff DeGraaf and Kenny Freeman on NIA programs.

Metal Building Laminators at Metalcon

- Having successfully developed metal building lamination articles for the September issue of *Insulation Outlook*, this issue of the magazine was submitted and displayed on the showroom floor during METALCON 2024: Metal Tradeshow Conference & Expo in Atlanta, October 30–November 1. Articles from the September issue will be pitched to other publications for placement
- Received an update on codes, ASHRAE 90.1, and IECC 2024 changes.
- Formed a Task Force to review 4481 testing process.
- Requested that a list of CFI Laminators be added to NIA's laminator webpage.



74%

of respondents gained
new business contacts



96%

of respondents said
business networking with
new/potential customers
exceeded or met
expectations



Technical Information Committee (TIC)

- The TIC approved one new glossary term: Plenum-Rated—a general reference to insulation materials and adhesives installed in plenums that comply with ASTM E84 or UL 723 25/50 flame spread/smoke-developed indexes OR are Listed and Labeled by a nationally recognized testing laboratory per the International Mechanical Code. For guidance, reference the project specifications.
- Members are encouraged to join the virtual meeting on February 18, 2025 to review Convention presentations, the content of the new jacketing spec chart, and the following terms.
 1. Felt
 2. Operating Temperature
 3. Leachate Sleeve/Barrier
 4. Insulation Ventilation System
 5. Low Point Drains
 6. Moisture Indicators
 7. Contact-Free Insulation System
 8. Cladding Penetration Seal
- The TIC evaluated new convention presentations and article ideas to educate the membership and end users.
- The TIC has added two new specification charts: "Mastic and Coatings for Insulation Systems," reference name: NIA-TIC-102-24, and the "Types of Sealants for Thermal Insulation" chart, reference name: NIA-TIC-103-24. They are available at www.insulation.org/about-insulation/system-design/techs-specs.
- The committee is working with ASTM C1696 to include NIA's "Insulation Materials Specification Chart," reference name: NIA-TIC-101, and expand NIA's educational value to the ASTM audience.

Union Contractors

- Learned about negotiation, mediation, and conflict resolution resources from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service's Field Operations Manager Kathy Hall.
- Participated in a regional updates discussion from member attendees.
- Heard the latest activities regarding the International Union.

Young Professional Advisory Committee (YPAC)

- Participated in an interactive presentation from FMI's Darice Thompson on communication skills and time management, allowing attendees to gain skills and get to know fellow YPAC members.
- Discussed updates from YPAC's mentor program, DEI Task Force, and Engineering Student Outreach, asking for new participants for each area.
- Asked to consider topics for future speakers, joining the leadership team, and preparing for a discussion on the carbon reduction message at the YPAC winter virtual meeting.



David Patrick, Senior Manager of Major Projects, Specialty Products & Insulation

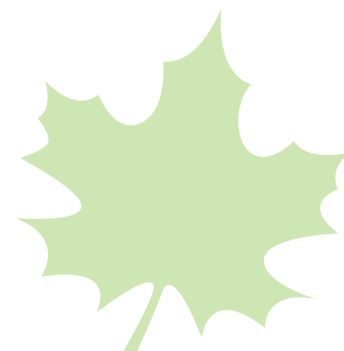
Insight from a Long-Time Member

“Having attended NIA events for many years, I value the opportunity for face-to-face meetings and conversations with manufacturers and contractors to better understand the current market and trends. This year, I found the sessions on carbon credits and the legislative outlook to be especially timely—they were both on point for our industry. But it’s not all work! You’ll come away with some new friends and relationships that will help you and your business.”

RECONNECTING FOR HAPPY HOURS!

The two happy hour events gave attendees a chance to enjoy each other’s company. Monday’s kick-off reception allowed attendees to reconnect before a very full day of industry meetings, and Tuesday’s happy hour gave everyone an opportunity to say farewell until next time, which will be NIA’s 69th Annual Convention, April 28–30, 2025, at the Grand Hyatt Scottsdale in Arizona. If you missed the NIA Fall Summit, make your plans now to join us in April! See page 7 for the latest details about the 2025 Annual Convention. And save the date for the 2025 Fall Summit: Oct. 28–29, 2025, at the MGM National Harbor in Maryland.

Thank You to Our 2024 Fall Summit Sponsors!



Congratulations NIA Contractors!

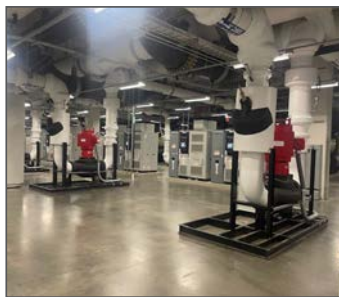
NIA's Insulation Project Art Gallery Showcase and Competition

Congratulations to the winners and all the participants in NIA's Insulation Project Art Gallery Showcase and Competition! The goal of the second annual showcase was to highlight the creativity, artistry, and craftsmanship of contractor mechanical and industrial insulation system projects. We were excited to have seven companies participate.

The projects were showcased anonymously at Fall Summit 2024, and all attendees had a chance to vote on their favorite. The judging criteria were: most parts insulated, aesthetics, difficulty of installation, and well-installed application.

The winners are:

FIRST PLACE: INSUL-TECH, INC.



SECOND PLACE (TIE): FIT TIGHT COVERS



SECOND PLACE (TIE): PERFORMANCE CONTRACTING, INC.



Thank you to all entrants who helped highlight the diversity and creativity of the mechanical insulation industry:

- Gribbins Insulation & Scaffolding
- International Asbestos Removal, Inc.
- L.C. Insulations, Inc.
- Luse Thermal Technologies, Inc.

Visit NIA's website at <https://tinyurl.com/b5mf7u4r> for project photos and more information on all projects. NIA is excited to promote the winning entries, including in future issues of *Insulation Outlook* magazine.

NIA Welcomes Two New Consultants:

Jeff DeGraaf and Kenny Freeman

NIA is pleased to announce the addition of two Consultants and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to the NIA team!



A 45-year industry veteran former contracting business owner, **Jeff DeGraaf** is a past NIA Board Member and former Midwest Insulation Contractors Association (MICA) President. Jeff retired from the industry with 45 years of experience in petrochemicals, power plants, cement plants, and food and beverage facilities. He holds safety and equipment certifications and has served as an SME to the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER), MICA, and for the *National Commercial and Industrial Insulation Standards Manual* (Standards Manual). Jeff sits on the Standards Manual committee and has chaired several committees.

Jeff will serve as the project lead for the development of National Insulation Standards. Jeff will also be instructing both the Insulation Energy Appraisal Program and the Thermal Insulation Inspector Program courses.



An SME with more than 40 years in the insulation industry, **Kenny Freeman** is a NIA Past President and Southwest Insulation Contractors Association Past President. His experience encompasses petrochemicals, power plants, cement plants, and food and beverage facilities. Kenny was President and Co-owner of Petrin Corporation, an industrial specialty services company headquartered in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Kenny is a founding member and past President of the Louisiana State University Construction Industry Advisory Council and a guest lecturer. He has held numerous positions on various industry boards, including the Louisiana Construction Education Foundation, GBRIA/Industrial Contractors Council Board. He also held Board positions in for the Associated Builders and Contractors Baton Rouge Chapter. Kenny was an SME for NCCER and for NIA's installation video series development.

Kenny's primary role as a NIA Consultant and SME will be to focus on industry marketing, certification course awareness and participation, and introducing NIA's courses into specifications.

An Update on Insulation Standards

With the passing of NIA Consultant Ron King in July, NIA has been working to identify consultants to oversee the various projects managed by Ron, including the development of standards. NIA Consultant Jeff DeGraaf will oversee this initiative.

NIA and the Association for Materials Protection and Performance (AMPP) have partnered to facilitate the development of joint standards in areas related to mechanical insulation in the commercial and industrial markets. It is important to emphasize that these standards will be application based; specific product and materials recommendations will not be included.

In the coming weeks, NIA will be posting information to its website with additional information related to the next group of standards to be drafted, and how members can get involved with the standards draft development. In addition, there will be instructions on how to sign up to join the AMPP/NIA Joint Standards Committee, SC 27, Mechanical Insulation.

Currently, Jeff and the NIA staff are reviewing two drafts that are currently moving through NIA's review process:

1. Installation Procedures—Flashing Sealant of Protrusions and Insulation Terminations in Mechanical Insulation Systems
 - For service temperature range of -500°F (-45°C) to 5000°F (260°C). Not applicable for cryogenic service or vapor stops/dam installations.
2. Installation Procedures—Insulation Joint Sealant for Rigid Mechanical Insulation Systems for Below Ambient Temperature Operating Systems

Once these first two draft standards have been approved by NIA's Board of Directors, they will be submitted for review and entry into AMPP's Standard Development process.

From the Foundation Board of Directors

Update on the Foundation for Mechanical Insulation Education, Training, and Industry Advancement



Mechanical Insulation
EDUCATION TRAINING ADVANCEMENT

The Foundation for Mechanical Insulation Education, Training, and Industry Advancement's (Foundation) Board of Directors met on October 29 to focus on a comprehensive list of discussion and action items. Highlights include:

- Reviewed and approved the Foundation's 2025 budget, which continues funding for educational programs and opportunities, including the development of standards.
- Discussed ideas for increasing Foundation and Legacy Circle Endowment Fund contributions.
- Established a reserve account to provide the Foundation with a financial safety net to cover unexpected expenses, weather economic downturns, or sustain operations during periods of reduced funding.
- Brainstormed ideas for engaging engineers in the mechanical insulation field and determining their needs.
- Continued support for the development of additional courses for NIA's Education Center.
- Planned for holding a stakeholder meeting in the first quarter of 2025 to update contributors on the work of the Foundation and the importance of financial contributions.

New Foundation Contributors

The Foundation Board of Directors wishes to thank Bay Insulation Supply (NIA Distributor member) and General Insulation Company, Inc. (NIA Distributor member), as the Foundation's newest contributors.

If your company would like to be a Foundation contributor, please visit www.insulation.org/foundation/contribute. If you do not see your company's name in the full list of companies supporting the Foundation (see below), please contact foundation@insulation.org for more information.

How to Support the Foundation

As 2024 winds to a close, please consider a contribution to the Foundation. As a reminder, contributions are tax-deductible. To learn more about the Foundation and the programs it supports, and for 2024 individual and corporate donations, please contact Kristin V. DiDomenico at foundation@insulation.org. The Foundation is an independent 501(c)(3) and is managed by the NIA professional staff.



Mechanical Insulation
EDUCATION TRAINING ADVANCEMENT

The Foundation's Board of Directors would like to thank all of the following contributors who make the work of the Foundation for Mechanical Insulation Education, Training, and Industry Advancement possible.

FOUNDING ORGANIZATION CONTRIBUTOR: National Insulation Association—\$86,000

GOLD ELITE

Annual Contribution of \$15,000

Distribution International, Inc.
Johns Manville
Knauf Insulation, Inc.
Owens Corning
Performance Contracting, Inc.
ROCKWOOL Technical Insulation
Specialty Products & Insulation

GOLD

Annual Contribution of \$5,000

Aeroflex USA
Alpha Engineered Composites, LLC
Armcell
Bay Insulation Supply
Caldwell Insulation, Inc.
Eastern States Insulation Contractors Association
Insulation Contractors Association of New York City

Insulation Materials Corporation
Irex Contracting Group
Lamtec Corporation
Thermal Insulation Association of Canada

SILVER

Annual Contribution of \$3,000

General Insulation Company, Inc.
Midwest Insulation Contractors Association
R.P.R. Products, Inc.
Southwest Insulation Contractors Association

BRONZE

Annual Contribution of \$1,000

Advanced Industrial Services, LLC
Advanced Specialty Contractors, LLC
Alkegen
Argus Contracting, LLC
Atlantic Contracting & Specialties, LLC

Cornerstone Services Group, LLC
Coverflex Manufacturing, Inc.
Delaware Valley Insulation and Abatement
Contractors Association, Inc.
DKB, Inc.
Dover Insulation, Inc.
Geo. V. Hamilton, Inc.
Heat Frost and Thermal Insulation Education Fund
Ideal Products of America Holdings, LLC
I-Star Energy Solutions
Kennedy Insulation Systems, Inc.
K-FLEX USA, LLC
Kirby-Cundiff Insulation
Midwest Materials Company
Petrin, LLC
Proto Corporation
Southeastern Insulation Contractors Association
Western Insulation Contractors Association
WICA Wisconsin Insulation Advancement Fund

Don't see your company listed?

To learn more about becoming a Foundation contributor, please see a staff member, visit www.insulation.org/foundation, or email foundation@insulation.org.

Want to Grow Your Sales?



Advertise in *Insulation Outlook* magazine or in the National Insulation Association's publications or websites to reach engineers, specifiers, facility/plant managers/owners, mechanical contractors, manufacturers, distributor/fabricators, metal building insulators, and insulation contractors **WITH ONE AD!**

Email Justin Wolfe at ads@insulation.org
to customize your marketing for 2025.

NIA | EDUCATION CENTER
THE EDUCATION LEADER FOR THE INSULATION INDUSTRY

POWERED BY:
KNAUF



Advance Your Insulation Industry Knowledge with Professional Training

Education Center Resources: Learn More about Learning Opportunities!

- Visit our FAQ web page at www.insulation.org/educationcenterfaqs.
- Visit our NIA Education Center Information web page: www.insulation.org/training-tools/niaeducationcenter (there is a 4-minute video demo, too).
- Visit www.niaeducationcenter.org to explore the platform.
- Email training@insulation.org or call 703-464-6422 and ask for Ashley Bartley (ext. 118) or Erin Penberthy (ext. 114).



Check out NIA's Education Center tips and tricks video to learn more about how to navigate the platform, track your courses, and download certificates.

Transform your team's expertise through NIA's comprehensive Education Center, featuring more than 65 specialized courses designed for industry professionals. Whether you are new to the field or advancing your career, our educational platform provides the targeted knowledge you need to succeed in the insulation industry. Our curriculum combines:

- **Technical insulation training:** master core industry concepts and best practices
- **Professional development:** build essential business and management skills
- **Safety-focused:** learn critical workplace safety protocols

Flexible learning paths accommodate both quick skill refreshers and more in-depth study modules and tracks. Each course is:

- Self-paced
- Available 24/7
- Designed for practical application

New courses include (the first three courses are for all NIA members, and Ladder Safety and Fall Protection are available to Premier Subscribers):

- **How to Use NIA's Science Glossary**—Especially helpful for industry newcomers, this course helps you to maximize NIA's Insulation Science Glossary.
- **How to Use NIA's Insulation Materials Specification Chart**—Understand how to access NIA's unbiased, easy-to-use selection guide focused on the physical and material properties of different types of insulation.

- **How to Use NIA's Guide to Insulation Product Specifications**—Learn how to access to use this helpful publication for the insulation contractor, specifier, user, and owner.
- **Ladder Safety**—Gain a fresh understanding of various types of ladders as well as guidelines for proper ladder safety and inspection.
- **Fall Protection**—Learn to identify common fall hazards, recognize the types of equipment and methods that provide fall protection, and understand the procedures designed to prevent falls.

New Technical Track Is Coming in Early 2025

Last year, we introduced our first track—Mechanical Insulation 101—and our second track is coming soon: 102 Mechanical Insulation Technical Resources, including:

- Top Technical Terms You Should Know
- Design Guide
- How to Use NIA's Insulation Science Glossary
- How to Use NIA's Insulation Materials Specification Chart
- How to Use NIA's Guide to Insulation Product Specifications
- k-, R-, and U-Values

After you complete the track, you will receive a completion certificate.

2025 Content and Subscriptions

With the help of our subject matter experts, NIA develops 15 to 25 new courses each year, so there is always something new being added to NIA's Education Center.

If your company is a current Premier Training Subscriber, your renewal for 2025 (at the 2024 rate) is part of your 2025 NIA membership dues renewal, which was emailed to the Primary Representative in mid-November. The renewal deadline for 2024 pricing is December 31, 2024.

For more information, or to become a Premier Training Subscriber, visit www.insulation.org/training-tools/naeducationcenter, or email training@insulation.org.

Launch into 2025 with Professional Development

Take the next step in your training journey with NIA's newly released schedule for 2025. Three intermediate and certification-level courses through eight learning opportunities are available, featuring both virtual and in-person instruction from February to December. (All dates are for 2025.)

On Demand and Discounted: Gain a Better Understanding of Specifications and Submittals

Two of NIA's popular intermediate-level courses are now available on demand through NIA's Education Center. Until December 19 or when the discount codes are sold out (whichever comes first), exclusive savings are available for NIA members to purchase access to Understanding the Submittal Process and Understanding Specifications.

- **Understanding Specifications**
A 6-hour course where students will learn about the purpose and complexity of specifications and how they vary by market segments.
Discounted Price with Savings: \$415
(original price \$515)
- **Understanding the Submittal Process**
A 3-hour course where students will learn how to identify the type and scope of submittal requirements, the components and importance of the submittal package, and the purpose of the submittal process.
Discounted Price with Savings: \$170
(original price \$205)

The discount codes are limited and will sell out! Claim the discount code by emailing training@insulation.org.

Understanding Mechanical Insulation

Training Level: Intermediate

Course Length: 2 days

Member Registration Fee: \$1,665

NIA | Understanding MECHANICAL INSULATION

This course is excellent training for new employees to gain an overview of the mechanical insulation industry and products, focusing on a review of industry market segments; the need for and importance of inspection; the purpose of mechanical insulation systems and why that is important to the inspection process; primary insulation materials and protective coverings; the importance of Safety Data Sheets; and codes, standards, regulations, and guidelines, and how they are intertwined.

COURSE DATES

February 25–26

Registration Deadline: February 6

Location: Philadelphia Airport Marriott, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

June 4–5

Registration Deadline: May 15

Virtual Course

December 3–4

Registration Deadline: November 12

Virtual Course

For more information, please visit www.insulation.org/training-tools.

If your company is interested in hosting a course for 10 or more team members or a group of customers, special pricing is available. For more information, email training@insulation.org.

Project Specification Alert

NIA is seeing an increasing requirement in project specifications for contractors to have Certified Thermal Insulation Inspectors on their payroll, particularly in data centers and LNG projects. Get your team certified as soon as possible by securing a spot in an upcoming course.

Thermal Insulation Inspector Certification™

Training Level: Certification Level

Course Length: 4 days

Member Registration Fee: \$2,805



This certification-level course is designed for experienced insulation professionals ready to learn a new specialty, and for companies ready to add insulation system inspection as part of their services. Who should take this course? Anyone who has responsibility for contracts, maintenance, business development, quality assurance/quality control, project oversight, safety, inspections, estimating, management, product development, mechanical insulation system design, and specification development.

COURSE DATES

February 25–28

Registration Deadline: February 6

Location: Philadelphia Airport Marriott, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

June 4–5 and June 11–12

Registration Deadline: May 15

Virtual course

December 3–4 and December 10–11

Registration Deadline: November 12

Virtual Course

Insulation Energy Appraisal Program™

Training Level: Certification Level

Course Length: 2 days

Member Registration Fee: \$1,555



This certification-level course teaches students how to determine the optimal insulation thickness and corresponding energy and dollar savings for a project. Learn how to conduct a facility walkthrough, use the 3E Plus® software, utilize infrared cameras during inspections, understand steam efficiencies, analyze and complete an appraisal spreadsheet, and present your customer with a final report that outlines the potential savings and emission reductions mechanical insulation can provide.

COURSE DATES

March 11–12

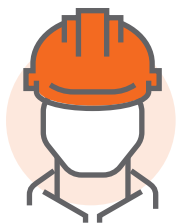
Registration Deadline: February 20

Virtual course

November 12–13

Registration Deadline: October 22

Virtual course



Safety Corner

NIA Fall 2024 General Counsel Report

By Gary Auman

On January 16, 2024, in the case of *Warren v. U.S. DOL* in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia involving a challenge to the DOL's **Independent Contractor Rule**, four freelance writers/editors sued the Department of Labor claiming the Independent Contractor Rule amounts to a concerted effort to force them into employment relationships they neither want nor need. On July 24, 2024, the court received submissions of cross-motions to dismiss the complaint. Before that, several amicus (friend of the court) briefs were filed. **The court has not yet issued a decision on the cross-motions to dismiss.**

The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals issued a decision on January 31, 2014, in *Fisher v. Airgas* that an **employee out on cancer leave who used a hemp-based product** called "Free M" for relief of treatment pain took a random drug test and tested positive and was terminated. The employee sued and won, and the company appealed this decision to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. The company relied on the "honest belief" doctrine. This doctrine shields companies from liability for allegedly discriminatory employment actions if they offer legitimate reasons based on incorrect information that they reasonably trusted at the time they made the decision. **The Court of Appeals ruled against the company and stated that the company could not rely on the "honest belief" doctrine without adequately investigating that the employee's use of the hemp could have caused a false-positive test result.**

In another challenge to the **Independent Contractor Rule**, on February 8, 2024, *Frisard's Transportation, LLC v. U.S. DOL* in the Eastern District of Louisiana suit was

filed by the Liberty Justice Center and the Pelican Inst. Co. for Public Policy on behalf of the company. The company employs 30 independent owner-operator drivers in the State of Louisiana. The current status of this case as of July 3, 2024, in order to stay and administratively close the case was issued by the court. However, the plaintiffs notified the court of their intent to appeal the court's previous order denying their motion for a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction. The plaintiffs have since filed an appeal at the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. **As of August 26, 2024, the current status of the Independent Contractor Rule is that amicus curiae briefs are being filed in the appellate case.**

The **Pregnant Worker's Fairness Act (PWFA)** was issued as a final regulation on April 15, 2024, by the EOCC. Numerous examples of reasonable accommodations under this act include additional breaks to drink water, eat, or use a restroom; a stool to sit on while working; time off for health care appointments; temporary reassignment; temporary suspension of particular job duties; telework; or time off to recover from childbirth or miscarriage. There is currently a lawsuit brought by 19 states against the regulation. Also, 23 other states have filed a brief in defense of the regulation. Oral argument took place on June 3, 2024, and on June 21, 2024, and an order was issued denying a motion for an injunction pending appeal. **The PWFA remains in force while appeals concerning challenges are litigated.**

On April 17, 2024, the United States Supreme Court heard *Muldrow v. City of St. Louis* about a plainclothes police officer who was transferred to a lesser position that has the same pay rate, but different

hours and duties sued claiming sex discrimination. A lower court tossed out the case saying that the plaintiff did not suffer any significant harm to build or bring the suit. **The Supreme Court disagreed stating that a worker does not have to show that the harm incurred by sex discrimination was significant or serious.**

The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals issued a decision on April 29, 2024, regarding an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations request. In the case of *Yanick v. the Kroger Co.*, a bakery worker returned to her position after breast cancer leave with her doctor's OK to return to full duty. However, she struggled with certain tasks and was demoted. She filed an ADA lawsuit and the court sided with her saying the employer should have inferred that her comments about her physical struggles amounted to a request for an ADA accommodation. **The takeaway from this decision is that as with the the Family and Medical Leave Act, employees do not need to say any magic words to request an ADA accommodation. You should ensure your managers know what may qualify and elevate subtle requests by an employee to the level of accommodations.**

On June 28, 2024, the Supreme Court in a decision titled *Loper Brite Enterprises v. Raimond* held that judges cannot defer to a government agencies interpretation of the law. Instead, judges must exercise "independent judgment" and give statutes their "best meaning." Judges can still consider agency guidance when that guidance is persuasive, long-standing, and consistent. But they cannot treat that guidance as "binding." They must interpret statutes for themselves. This decision could make

it harder for agencies to make rules. For example, instead of defending their rules as “reasonable” interpretations of a statute, they will now have to defend the rules as the “best” interpretations of the statute, and in court, they will be on equal footing with parties trying to challenge the rules. This decision overturned the *Chevron* rule.

In an interesting decision on July 1, 2024, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Corner Post, Inc. v. the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System* that **the statute of limitations for challenging the rule under the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) begins to run only when the challenger has been injured by the rule.** The previous statute limitations that was applied stated that the 6-year statute of limitations began when the act became a final rule. The ruling means that a challenger can sue to block a rule that has been on the books for many years.

On August 30, 2024, the Biden–Harris administration published a proposed rule to protect indoor and outdoor workers from extreme heat. As indicated in the standard, the heat injury and illness prevention standard will require employers to develop

an injury and illness prevention plan (**HIIPP**) to control heat hazards in workplaces affected by excessive heat. The plan would require employers to evaluate heat risks and the risk to workers and implement requirements for drinking water, rest breaks, and controlling indoor heat. As for outdoor workers, a heat illness prevention plan will have to be developed for each work site.

On September 4, 2024, the Federal Trade Commission's new rule banning noncompetes went into effect. Challenges have been made against the new standard, however, **in only one case was an injunction granted and that injunction was limited to the parties to the lawsuit.** That injunction was granted in the Northern District of Texas. In a similar case filed in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, the court denied the request for an injunction. So while legal



GARY AUMAN (www.amfdayton.com) is a Partner in the law firm of Auman, Mahan, and Furry in Dayton, Ohio. His practice focuses on counseling and defending employers in safety and health matters. He frequently works with employers and OSHA to find workable solutions to OSHA enforcement actions. He represents four national and regional trade associations in the construction industry and can be reached at gwa@amfdayton.com.

challenges are pending, the **noncompetes ban is in full force and effect.**

Finally, OSHA recently issued its top 10 most strictly cited workplace safety standards for FY 2024. They are as follows:

1. General Requirements for Fall Protection (1926.501)
2. Hazard Communication (1910.1200)
3. Ladders (1926.1053)
4. Respiratory Protection (1910.134)
5. Lockout/Tagout (1910.147)
6. Powered Industrial Trucks (1910.178)
7. Fall Protection – Training Requirements (1926.503) (specifically 1926.503 (a) and (b))
8. Scaffolding (1926.451)
9. Personal Protective and Lifesaving Equipment – I and Face Protection (1926.102)
10. Machine Guarding (1910.212)

Insights from NIA's Young Professional Advisory Committee (YPAC) Mentor Program

WORK-LIFE BALANCE: How to Strike It and Why It Is Important

By Jessica Zahn

We can all agree that work-life balance is important. The difficulty begins when determining how to establish and maintain this balance.

Introduction

The topic of work-life balance is a fundamentally personal one. It concerns how we spend our time—ultimately, our lives—and what we prioritize. It is closely tied to what is happening around us, both at work and at home, with family and friends, as well as

within ourselves. Work-life balance depends on where we are in our careers and what currently matters most in our lives. When we start considering every aspect it encompasses, the concept can become quite complex and even daunting.

Michele M. Jones, NIA's EVP/CEO, offers a great suggestion for simplifying this idea. She calls it the “Rule of Thirds.” Essentially, a third of our time should be dedicated to work, a third to family and friends, and a third to ourselves. The time frame for considering these thirds may vary—from a day, a week, or even a month—and

that is perfectly fine. Michele's philosophy acknowledges that a perfect balance is sometimes unattainable; and in such cases, we should be flexible. For example, we might be facing a critical deadline at work, or dealing with poor health in our personal lives. During these times, we should prioritize what is most important, and aim to reestablish balance when we are able.

Since work-life balance is so personal, it is essential to understand your own philosophy. I believe in being grateful for the company I work for and the opportunities and experiences it has provided, while also remembering that, in the end, I am replaceable. If I no longer work there, my role and responsibilities will be filled. This awareness helps guide my priorities and allows me to maintain my own work-life balance.

In addition to having a philosophy, Michele and I discussed a few other keys to finding balance. One is to find work that energizes, rather than drains us, leaving us ready to take on whatever else is on our plate. Another key is to establish appropriate boundaries with our companies through open dialogue, communication, and mutual respect. By setting boundaries, we create clear expectations and reduce frustration. However, this requires self-reflection. Before we can advocate for what is acceptable, we must first understand what that looks like for ourselves.

This conversation with Michele came at a particularly opportune time, as I was transitioning into a new role and felt pressure to devote more time to work, which meant I was neglecting time with my family. Through our discussions, I was able to assess and reestablish expectations, which alleviated the overwhelming internal pressure I had placed on myself to excel in the new position. Ultimately, I learned that work-life balance affects every facet of our lives, as it centers on what we give our attention to—and, consequently, what we care about. No one else can define what a good work-life balance looks like for you. With that in mind, I would like to leave you with the list of questions Michele and I went through. The best way I have found to create

meaningful change in my life is through a cycle of reflection and action. I encourage you to ask yourself these questions, sit with the answers, and find your path forward:

1. We can all agree that work-life balance is important, but what does work-life balance specifically mean to you?
2. What are your philosophies on work-life balance?
3. How do you implement work-life balance when work and life get busy?
 - What remains a priority?
 - What can be done to complete what is required in a day?
4. Was there someone influential in your life who helped you learn the importance of work-life balance?
 - What wisdom did they share?
 - How did you put that into practice?
 - Do you still practice it today?
5. Can you recall a time when you were not practicing work-life balance?
 - How did you feel at work? At home?
 - What happened in the relationship with those around you?
 - What did you do to get the balance back?
 - How did it change the way you prioritize work and life responsibilities going forward?
6. In the technology era we live in, how do you use technology to improve work-life balance?
7. How have you set boundaries with the companies you worked for over your career?
8. What boundaries have you set with yourself?
9. Have those boundaries changed as you have progressed in your career? How so?
10. What is the one piece of advice on work-life balance you would give to someone starting their career?

Jessica Zahn is now the Business Development Manager – Aerospace & Energy Storage for Morgan Advanced Materials Thermal Ceramics.



Celebrating MEMBERS!

Knauf North America Celebrates Boosting Local Glass Recycled Content in Its Products



Knauf Insulation, Inc. (Knauf), a family-owned business and one of the largest fiber glass insulation manufacturers in the United States, celebrates its 2-year partnership with Caldwell's to increase glass recycling in Indiana's Shelby and Hancock Counties.

Knauf has always been dedicated to its sustainability initiatives, specifically in the communities in which its facilities are present. As part of that commitment to local communities, Knauf has focused on increasing the amount of local recycled glass used in their products. Knauf identified the need for local businesses in Shelby and Hancock Counties, near its corporate headquarters in Shelbyville, Indiana, to recycle glass and prevent it from being thrown away.

Knauf partnered with Caldwell's Inc., a Shelby County transportation company that also specializes in food waste recycling, to take action on this goal. Caldwell's provided the operational framework required to transport glass, currently picking up empty glass bottles from more than 40 local businesses in the counties, hauling approximately six tons monthly to be recycled. This collaboration merges Caldwell's logistical expertise with Knauf's production capabilities, offering a convenient solution to reduce landfill waste.

"We understand there are challenges to glass recycling, and we are trying to solve this for local communities near our headquarters, with hopes to replicate similar partnerships in other communities where we have operations," said Chris Mahin, Vice President of Sustainability and Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) at Knauf. "The Shelby and Hancock Recycling Districts are valuable stakeholders, and through their support, we were able to initiate Caldwell's collection with local restaurants and bars. This partnership is a powerful example of how local collaboration can drive positive impact."

Knauf and Caldwell's are exploring opportunities to enhance the program, including expanding the number of businesses participating, increasing community involvement, and introducing technologies that further improve efficiency.

"Our role is to ensure that the logistics of glass collection are efficient and effective," said Jordan Caldwell, president of Caldwell's Inc. "We are proud to support Knauf by helping local businesses participate in glass recycling."

The success of this collaboration highlights the power of local partnerships to drive meaningful change.

If your company has an accomplishment it wants to celebrate and share with the NIA community, submit your press release to editor@insulation.org.

EVENT CALENDAR



(703) 464-6422

www.insulation.org/events/calendar
events@insulation.org

NIA MEETINGS

NIA's 69th Annual Convention

April 28–30, 2025

Grand Hyatt Scottsdale Resort
Scottsdale, Arizona

Fall Summit 2025

October 28–29, 2025

MGM National Harbor
National Harbor, Maryland
(just outside of Washington, DC)

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REGIONAL INSULATION MEETINGS

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Central States Insulation Association (CSIA)

Contact: Rachel Pinkus
(937) 278-0308, www.csiaonline.org

2025 CSIA Spring Labor Conference

May 12–14, 2025

French Lick Resort
French Lick, Indiana

Eastern States Insulation Contractors Association (ESICA)

Contact: John F. DeLillo
(516) 922-7855, www.esica.org

ESICA Spring Conference

May 7–9, 2025

LaPlaya Beach and Golf Resort
Naples, Florida

Midwest Insulation Contractors Association (MICA)

Contact: Rachel Pinkus
(937) 278-0308, www.micainsulation.org

MICA Winter Board and

Committee Meetings

January 23–25, 2025

Hyatt Regency Sarasota
Sarasota, Florida

Southeastern Insulation Contractors Association (SEICA)

Contact: Erin Penberthy
(571) 266-3129, www.seica.org

SEICA 2025 Spring Conference

June 22–24, 2025

Omni Amelia Island Resort
Fernandina Beach, Florida

Southwest Insulation Contractors Association (SWICA)

Contact: Lindsay Konlande
(832) 971-5989, www.swicaonline.org

SWICA Annual Conference

May 28–June 1, 2025

The Lodge
Gulf Shores, Alabama

Thermal Insulation Association of Canada (TIAC)

Contact: Robin Baldwin
(613) 724-4834, www.tiac.ca

2025 TIAC Conference

August 13–16, 2025

Sternwheeler Hotel and
Conference Centre
Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada

Western Insulation Contractors Association (WICA)

Contact: Robert Bergman
(801) 364-0050, www.wica1.com

WICA Annual Convention

September 14–16, 2025

Everline Resort & Spa
Lake Tahoe, California

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InsulateMetalBuildings.org
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