

# Reauthorized Perkins Act Brings Hope to Skilled Worker Shortage

On Tuesday, September 13, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the "Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act".

This Act reauthorizes the Carl D. Perkins Act, which aims to



provide secondary and postsecondary students with the education and skills needed to succeed in the workplace. Leaders of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committees are scheduled to

mark up and pass the bill in the coming weeks before sending it to the President.

The Perkins Act was scheduled for reauthorization in 2012 but the deadline was extended to the end of 2013. Reauthorization of the Act brings a few changes to the law. States will be allowed to withhold a greater share of their federal CTE funding under Perkins for their own competitive grants or formulas.

There will also be a new grant program, overseen by the education secretary, which would award money to programs that align CTE with states workforce needs.

The reauthorized Act will not just boost the economy, it will also boost the construction industry, which has been experiencing a shortage of skilled labor since 2011. Two-thirds of construction firms have reported having a hard time filling skilled labor positions. Since skilled labor positions are the bulk of the construction workforce, this presents a huge problem as construction only continues to grow. Though the Act will not change the labor shortage overnight, it is a big step towards providing some relief to contractors that have been struggling to fill jobs for the last several years.

## Member News

**Miller Construction Company** has added Rick Smolich, Alvaro Mercado and William "Bill" Jessee to the design/build and construction services firm's project leadership Team.

Smolich, who holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Norwich University, has joined the company as preconstruction manager; Mercado, who holds a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the Universidad del Norte in Barranquilla, Colombia, has joined as an assistant project manager; and Jessee, who attended Austin College and Florida Atlantic University, has joined as a superintendent.

"Rich, Alvaro and Bill's determination to provide our clients with great value, by making all decisions in the clients' best interests, is a great fit with our culture," said Miller's Senior Vice President Brian Sudduth.

**Alpha Insulation and Waterproofing** has added Tom Welsh as their new Director of Business Development. Tom has over 30 years of experience with waterproofing companies and was previously on the CASF Board of Directors for 14 years.

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Rich Smolich



Alvaro Mercado



Bill Jessee



Tom Welsh

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Each month Construction FOCUS features a CASF member company, selected by drawing a business card from among those attending the monthly networking breakfast. The next breakfast, sponsored by Suffolk Construction, will be held on Thursday, October 20, 7:30 a.m. at Shula's Hotel in Miami Lakes.

## Connecting You on the Job Site

SEI Wireless Solutions is a nationwide sales, service and rental business that



features Motorola two-way radio equipment and In-Building signal boosters. What began as Florida Radio Rental, founded in 1984 became SEI Wireless Solutions when Steven Regli took ownership in

2009. At conception the company provided radio rentals to local businesses for events. They have grown from being a small local rental company to nationwide company that designs, installs and integrates wireless communication systems and DAS. Their hard work and dedication have earned them many awards including being one of Motorola's top Channel Partner for the past seven years.

SEI Wireless Solutions aims to be the most preferred company known in its industry to facilitate a smooth and affordable approach in the purchase and implementation of wireless communication systems. SEI listens, educates and advises customers on the

best wireless communication systems available. The SEI team has over 150 combined years of Motorola experience, and continuously strives to provide the best customer service to all its clients. Janice Materiale, SEI's Senior Account Executive, shared with us, "We honestly care about our customers, and treat them like friends and family. Here at SEI we enjoy providing our customers with quality products, excellent service, and a good value." The unwavering customer support provided by SEI is recognized and appreciated by companies such as the Hard Rock Stadium, the Acqualina properties, American Airlines Arena, Fontainebleau Miami Beach, Carnival Cruise Lines, Stiles Construction, and Coastal Construction to name just a few.

SEI Wireless Solutions joined CASF in 2011, while Janice has been a long time member, and is very active when it comes to participating in events. In fact, SEI Wireless Solutions is the official two-way radio provider at the CASF Annual Charity Golf Tournament. Since joining the association, Janice finds that she has formed many good business relationships over the years with people involved in the construction industry that have a need for SEI's products.

SEI Wireless Solutions is located on 3901 S State Road 7 in Davie. For more information about SEI Wireless Solutions and the services they offer please call them at 954-615-1500, or visit the website at [www.seiwirelessolutions.com](http://www.seiwirelessolutions.com).

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Construction Focus is the official publication of the Construction Association of South Florida. Article suggestions and submissions for publication consideration should be forwarded to the Executive Vice President.

# Protect Employees from Silica Exposure to Prevent Silicosis

About 2 million workers in the construction industry are exposed to respirable crystalline silica in the workplace. Workers who drill, cut, crush or grind silica-containing materials such as concrete and stone are exposed to it on almost a daily basis. Many employers have been protecting employees for years using equipment that controls dust with water or a vacuum system. However, a rise in silica-related diseases in new industries requires an updated standard to protect all employees from employers that are not as conscientious.

OSHA has published a final rule to protect American workers by limiting their exposure to silica. This was done in an effort to curb silicosis, a progressive, disabling and often fatal lung disease. While fatal on its own, silicosis can also lead to lung cancer, bronchitis, scleroderma, possible renal disease and susceptibility to tuberculosis.

The final rule has two standards, one of which is specifically for the construction industry. The new standard limits permissible exposure limit (PEL) for respirable crys-

talline silica to 50 micrograms per cubic meter of air during an 8-hour shift (The previous rule permitted 100 micrograms per cubic meter of air). Under the new rule employers must also use engineering controls to limit exposure, provide respirators when engineering controls do not adequately limit exposure, limit access to high exposure areas, develop an exposure control plan and train employees to limit their exposure. Medical exams must also be provided to highly exposed workers. OSHA



is providing flexibility to small businesses in need of help to protect workers from silica exposure.

The new standard became effective on June 23, 2016. The construction industry has 1 year to comply. OSHA estimates that the updated rule will save over 600 lives and prevent more than 900 new cases of silicosis each year.

In addition to the key provisions listed in the new standard, there are several things that can be done to prevent exposure to silica dust:

1. Use a water hose to

wet dust before it becomes airborne.

2. Use saws that add water to the blade.
3. Use drills that add water through the stem or have dust collection systems.
4. Substitute non-crystalline silica blasting material.
5. Use blast cleaning machines or cabinets to control dust.
6. Provide employees with properly fitted and selected respirators designated specifically for protection against crystalline silica.
7. Practice good hygiene – Do not eat or drink in dusty areas, wash hands, park cars away from silica contaminated areas, change into washable clothes for work and, if possible, clean clothes before returning home so as not to contaminate your car or home.

Hundreds of workers die or become disabled as a result of silicosis. Chronic silicosis can go undetected for 15-20 years. Always be aware of employees and possible silicosis symptoms which include shortness of breath, possible fever, loss of appetite, chest pain, dry cough or respiratory failure. These symptoms can become worse over time and eventually lead to death. Anyone suspected of having symptoms of silicosis should see a doctor immediately.

Please visit [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov) for frequent updates to the final rule.

# CASF Driving Challenge

Wednesday, September 21, 2016



1st Place—Calvin, Giordano & Associates

2nd Place—Titan Structural, Inc.

3rd Place—Lotspeich Co. of Florida

