



News, Views & Comments from the World of Building Service Contracting

Submit your news for publication to Carol Dean at cdean@wfbsc.org

ARGENTINA-BUENOS AIRES

World Bank Gives \$15 Million Grant

The World Bank has granted US\$15 million to be used over a 6-year period to improve the efficiency of Argentina's energy supply. The end result will be reduced fuel consumption and environmental impact. While Argentina is the fourth highest energy user in Latin America and comes in second behind Venezuela in its rate of energy consumption per capita, less than 0.1 percent of its energy supply comes from renewable sources.

AUSTRALIA-VICTORIA

The Number Of Executives For Hire Increases

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported the unemployment rate fell to 4.2 percent with total jobs rising by 29,800 in June. However, demand for executives fell by four percent from the month prior. Only Western Australia and Queensland had gains and Western Australia has now overtaken New South Wales as the largest supplier in relation to population size of executive positions. Of those executive positions in demand, only marketing had increases whereas executive positions in other disciplines such as finance, engineering, information technology and management decreased. Search firm E.L. Consult claims the trend will continue for at least two more quarters but notes the good news is the decline would be moderate so that the overall impact would not be substantial.

BELGIUM-BRUSSELS

Euro Area GDP Up By 0.7 Percent

According to Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, Euro Area and EU27 GDP grew by 0.7 percent in the first quarter of 2008 over the previous quarter. Seasonally adjusted GDP grew in the first quarter by 2.1 percent in the euro area and by 2.3 percent in the EU27 and household final consumption expenditure increased by 0.2 percent in the euro area and by 0.3 percent in the EU27. In addition, investment grew by 1.6 percent and exports rose by 1.9 percent.

BRAZIL - BRASILIA

Toyota To Build New Plant

To keep up with surging demand in Brazil, Toyota Motor Corp will invest between \$600 million and \$700 million to build a new plant in Sorocaba in the interior of Sao Paulo state. Toyota already has factories in Indaiatuba and Sao Bernardo do Campo, also in Sao Paulo state.

CANADA-BRITISH COLUMBIA

Crew Makes \$400,000 Find

When cleaning crews were sent to clean up a small apartment owned by an elderly woman after she died, they found \$400,000 in cash. The money was found hidden among the retro furniture and

1950s electronics, the piles of mildewed clothes, rat droppings and a mountain of rusted tuna and salmon cans. The money was given back to the woman's family, while anything that was salvageable inside the building was donated or recycled.

FRANCE-PARIS

Production Rate Lowest In 16 Years

French industrial production fell 2.6 percent in May from the prior month, the biggest decline since December 1992 and the most in 16 years. According to the European Union Statistical Office, Eurostat, production decreased 0.6 percent, which was the first decrease in three years. An economist at JP Morgan Chase & Company is claiming that capital spending and hiring will most likely slow notably as the economy enters a period of quasi-stagnation.

GERMANY-BERLIN

Berlin Drafts Plan To Attract Workers

A shortage of qualified workers in certain sectors has led German officials to identify strategies to attract skilled foreign workers. Businesses have complained that current measures in place are too restrictive and ineffective. A draft proposal will be submitted in late July. One plan is to survey some 7,000 companies monthly to determine what kinds of skills would be needed in the upcoming six months and adapt the granting of work visas accordingly.

IRELAND-BELFAST

MRSA Outbreak Closes Hospital Ward

When two patients were infected with MRSA, eight others were shown to be carrying the bug and one person died health chiefs at Erne Hospital in Enniskillen decided to close Ward 9. Appropriate infection control and cleaning procedures were put into place to combat the situation.

JAPAN-TOKYO

Janitor Causes Stir At Subway Station

With the city on high alert while the Group of Eight summit was being held, when a small can and a plastic bottle containing suspicious liquid were left at a Tokyo subway station, chaos ensued. A security guard found the objects which were accidentally left behind by a janitor at the station. The bottle turned out to be detergent, and the can contained only soap so after a 30 minute period, the station reopened.

NEW ZEALAND-WELLINGTON

Gloomy Picture Expected To Worsen

The Institute of Economic Research's quarterly survey of business opinion indicates the third quarter of 2008 will decline, the third quarter in a row that this has been the case. A net 18 percent of firms reported a decrease in their activity, up from a net 7 percent in the March survey and the weakest level since 1998. Whereas 3 percent of firms have reported a decline in staff, 6 percent say they will lay off more staff in the next three months. In addition the former shortage of skilled workers has improved. The survey also showed almost half of the firms had price increases in the past three months, which is the highest in 21 years and 40 percent are expecting a decline in profits.

SOUTH KOREA-SEOUL

Statistics To Be Streamlined

In a government effort to prevent confusion and redundancy, economic statistics which overlap those published by different institutions will be abolished or combined. Beginning in September, the consumer survey index and consumer sentiments surveys will only be published by the Bank of Korea and no longer by the National Statistical Office. In addition, the Bank will be the only organization to publish the annual analysis of local firms. Currently, the Korea Development Bank was also reporting on the data.

TAIWAN-TAIPEI

Rules Relaxed For Immigrant Spouses

Immigrant spouses seeking naturalization will now have an easier time once the Ministry of the Interior changes the financial regulations in place currently. The Nationality Act requires immigrants to submit proof they possess NT\$420,000 (US\$13,000) and have annual household income twice the amount of the minimum wage. The new rules will now allow the cash requirement to be met with property value and the household income requirement will be reduced to 1.1 times the minimum wage.

THE NETHERLANDS-AMSTERDAM

Number Of Entrepreneurs Rising

Over a ten-year period beginning in 1996, the proportion of entrepreneurs in the labor force in the Netherlands grew from 10.2 to 11.5 percent. During this time, only the proportion of entrepreneurs in Italy and Austria grew more rapidly. Australia has a higher proportion of entrepreneurs than the Netherlands whereas the United States and Japan do not. Of the proportion of entrepreneurs in the Netherlands, the number of business service providers has risen considerably.

UK-LONDON

C. Diff Menaces Vale Of Leven Hospital

Additional cleaning measures and strict infection control procedures are in place at Vale of Leven Hospital to address an outbreak of C. Diff. More than 50 people have been infected with C. Diff at the hospital in the last six months and nine have died as a direct result of the infection with an additional nine more deaths related to C. Diff infections.

US-CALIFORNIA

Tens Of Thousands Of Guards Not Complying

In an effort to crack down on security guards in California and companies who hire them from not complying with state licensing requirements, the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services, which regulates the industry is conducting random checks at businesses and at venues that employ guards to ensure guards are registered with the state and have undergone successful background checks. According to officials, tens of thousands of security guards are not in compliance and only 4,200 – or 4 percent – of the state's estimated 100,000 in-house security officers have registered. Part of the problem is the Bureau has only four enforcement workers and does not have the authority to punish offenders. A state senator who has been behind much of the guard legislation is considering a law that would give the Bureau enforcement powers. The state is also developing guidelines to address the huge disparity in training among guards. Currently only contract security guards are required to undergo 40 hours of training but the state is trying to require in-house security guards to attend the same 40 hours of training. A committee comprised of representatives from the retail and hospitality sectors has proposed a 16-hour course for in-house guards, which the state is currently reviewing.

US-NEW YORK

62,000 Jobs Lost In June

With employers cutting hours for their full-time employees, shrinking salaries and laying off workers, the U.S. Department of Labor reported 62,000 jobs were lost in June, the sixth consecutive month that payrolls have declined. Businesses cut 52,000 more workers previously in April and May. The U.S. has only seen a net gain of 15,000 jobs since the beginning of the year, the lowest increase since 2003. Average hourly earnings grew only 3.4 percent, the slowest pace since the start of 2006. Janitors and administrative workers were the hardest hit, with about 70,000 workers losing their jobs in June alone.

US-VIRGINIA

Company To Stop Products, Raise Prices

Newell Rubbermaid, faced with high energy prices that make plastic more expensive to produce, is going to stop making some products and raise the prices on others as much as 22 percent. The company also said it would divest, downsize or exit product categories that amount to up to \$500 million in sales.

CORPORATE MEMBER NEWS

Ecolab

Ecolab Inc. announced that the directors designated by stockholder Henkel AG & Co. KGaA have decided to resign from Ecolab's board. In a letter to Ecolab, Henkel indicated that while it intends to sell part or all of its investment in Ecolab, uncertainty regarding when or how that sale would take place made it prudent for Henkel to forgo representation on Ecolab's board at this time. Ecolab understands that Henkel does not want the information available to Ecolab directors to interfere with Henkel's process of deciding when and how to dispose of some or all of its investment in Ecolab. Henkel has indicated in its public filings that no final decision has been taken at this time as to the size, timing and method of any such divestiture which would be carried out in accordance with a stockholder's agreement between Ecolab and Henkel.

The Henkel designated directors who are resigning are Messrs. Stefan Hamelmann, Kasper Rorsted and Hans Van Bylen. Under terms of the stockholder's agreement with Ecolab, Henkel is permitted board representation proportional to its shareholdings. In February 2008 Henkel reported it owned 29.4% of Ecolab shares.

Douglas M. Baker, Jr., Ecolab's Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer commented on the action, saying "These resignations are an understandable step in Henkel's effort to effect best practices in corporate governance. It ensures the Henkel representatives will not have access to confidential Ecolab information as Henkel assesses a potential sale of Ecolab shares."

JohnsonDiversey

JohnsonDiversey, has achieved a significant reduction in volatile organic compound (VOC) content in its line of market-leading floor finishes more than two years ahead of a California Air Resources Board (CARB) deadline. The standards call for a VOC limit of 1 percent, effective January 1, 2011. As a floor finish is used, its VOCs release emissions that affect air quality. Floor finish with a lower VOC content has less environmental impact, which is the objective of the new CARB standard.

The first product in the JohnsonDiversey floor-finish line up to meet the CARB standard is Signature TM ultra high-speed floor finish, the company's market-leading floor finish. The reformulated SignatureTM maintains its outstanding performance while VOC content has been reduced by 40 percent.

JohnsonDiversey scientists began work on reformulating floor finishes more than a year ago. In all, about 15 floor-finish products under brand names of Johnson Wax Professional and Butcher's are being reformulated to meet the CARB standard. SignatureTM, as the company's largest selling floor finish, represents the largest volume of product already reformulated.

First introduced in 1993, SignatureTM is an easy-to-apply, highly durable floor finish, which can be repeatedly burnished to a high shine.

The reformulation had an unexpected result with customers, according to Lonergan. "Feedback from more than 100 customer trials concluded the reformulation actually gave SignatureTM an even higher initial shine without any loss of durability and burnishing capability," Mr. Lonergan said.

UPCOMING EVENTS

17th Congress of the World Federation of Building Service Contractors

Buenos Aires, Argentina
October 26-29, 2008

Visit www.wfbsc2008.com.ar
for more information.

18th Congress of the World Federation of Building Service Contractors

New Zealand - 2010



ALL BUILDING SERVICE CONTRACTING COMPANIES THAT ARE MEMBERS OF ONE OF THE ASSOCIATIONS THAT IS A WFBC MEMBER, ARE AUTOMATICALLY MEMBERS OF THE WFBC.

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