



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

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### ARGENTINA-BUENOS AIRES

#### Argentina Reports Third Highest Deaths

The death toll from swine flu in Argentina continued to rise as President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner said she would not rule out closing major public venues where the virus could spread more quickly. As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, Argentina had 2,485 reported cases of H1N1 and 60 deaths. Argentina is now the country with the third highest number of fatalities from H1N1 behind the US and Mexico. In fact, the Argentine Association of Banks took advantage of a long holiday weekend and closed July 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> in an effort to slow the spread of the virus. All of Argentina's 23 districts and the city of Buenos Aires have extended school vacations, some by as long as a month. Authorities are also advising against attending events with large amounts of people.

### AUSTRALIA-VICTORIA

#### Inspectors Making Surprise Inspections

Eight inspectors will be making surprise inspections at up to 30 commercial buildings in Sydney and North Sydney during June and July. The random night-time visits are the result of a rise in complaints from cleaners regarding pay levels. The Federal Workplace Ombudsman believes based upon information it has received that the audits are warranted and will be checking that employers are paying the correct hourly rates of pay, including weekend penalties, shift penalties, public holiday

loadings and allowances. According to the Workplace Ombudsman, the Australian Cleaning Contractors' Association, the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union and the Building Service Contractors' Association of Australia have all been advised and support the targeted campaign. A report on the outcome will be completed by September.

### BELGIUM-BRUSSELS

#### First Quarter Construction Output Up

Eurostat reports that while activity in the construction sector was down compared to the previous year, production increased by 0.6% in the euro area in April 2009, compared with March 2009. It was down by 4.7% compared to April 2008. The most significant increases were registered in the Czech Republic (+5.2%), Spain (+3.2%) and Sweden (+2.9%). Annually, construction output rose in four Member states and fell in eight. The highest increases were recorded in Germany (+6.1%), Sweden (+4.6%) and the Czech Republic (+3.3%). Civil engineering decreased by 1.4% in the euro area from the previous month and increased by 3.0% in the euro area over the prior year.

### BRAZIL-SAO PAULO

#### CDC Rejects Mutant Strain Report

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other experts have rejected a report from Medical News Today, based upon information from the Adolfo Lutz Bacteriological

Institute in Sao Paolo that a new strain of the novel H1N1 influenza virus has been identified in a Brazilian patient. Scientists at the Institute said they found the new strain in a local patient who has recovered. The story said the scientists found "a number of discrete alterations in nucleotide and amino acid sequences" in the isolate's hemagglutinin (HA) gene. They also analyzed the matrix- protein (MP) gene and found no changes. But a CDC spokesman in Atlanta said there is no evidence of a new strain.

## CANADA-OTTAWA

### Company Purchases On Rise

The Ivey purchasing managers' index, a monthly survey of spending activity, which is used as a key indicator of economic performance, indicated that purchases by businesses and governments rose to 58.2 during June from 48.4 in May. The survey of 175 managers in both the public and private sectors looks at monthly purchases, employment, inventories, supplier deliveries and prices. The biggest gains were in supplier deliveries. Employment remained flat and inventories fell. However despite the promising news, a strategist at TD Securities says the numbers suggest that the Canadian economy is continuing to contract, although the pace has diminished.

## FRANCE-PARIS

### Businesses May Soon Open on Sundays

In an effort to reduce the impact of the recession on employment and save what the government indicates could be as many as 15,000 jobs, the National Assembly has approved a proposal that would allow businesses in certain tourist areas and urban commercial zones to operate on Sundays. 500 tourist towns, 30 commercial zones and cities with more than one million residents, such as Paris, Lille and Marseille would be affected. Recent polls show the public is receptive but there has been opposition from labor groups and religious institutions and some are weary of extending the work week to include Sunday. In France, no Sunday trading has been a rule since a 1906 law consecrated the day of rest, although bakeries, butchers and other small shops are allowed to open until noon. Supporters of the proposal claim the new measures would mainly affect retailers in cities where many big-chain stores currently defy the laws

and pay large fines for conducting business on Sundays. The proposal does not include requiring payment of higher salaries for working on a Sunday. The bill must now go before the Senate for approval.

## GERMANY-BERLIN

### German Workers Experience Tax Freedom Day

The German Association of Taxpayers has calculated that on July 14, 2009 at exactly 8:42 am, Germans started symbolically pocketing their entire wages. Tax Freedom Day is the first day of the year in which a nation as a whole has theoretically earned enough income to fund its annual tax burden. Prior to July 14 this year, the country's overall tax burden was 53.3 percent. The Association notes that tax freedom day came nearly a week later in 2009 than in 2008, which indicates lower taxes are needed. The group did say that tax freedom day should come a bit earlier in 2010 due to a recent change allowing employees to write off their contributions to government health insurance. This will lower the tax burden by some €9.4 billion in 2010.

## JAPAN-TOKYO

### Bank Of Japan Weighing Measures

The Policy Board of the Bank of Japan has met to discuss what it will do with the unconventional measures it introduced to combat the global financial crisis and tightness in the credit markets. The programs are set to expire at the end of September. Earlier in 2009, the bank implemented emergency lending programs such as the outright purchase of corporate bonds and commercial paper, or short-term corporate debt, from financial institutions. Another program grants unlimited loans to financial institutions at a low interest rate against approved collateral. With the gradual economic improvement, the central bank is concerned that keeping the measures in place may have long-term damage; however the persistent global recession has tempted the Policy Board to keep the emergency measures in place. Experts predict the bank will maintain its April predictions, which claimed the economy would shrink around 3 percent in fiscal 2009, but would start to recover in the latter half of the business year. The Policy Board is expected to hold the key interest rate steady at 0.1 percent.

## NEW ZEALAND-AUCKLAND

### Organizations Attempt To Increase Wool Sales

In an effort to re-brand New Zealand wool carpets as a luxury sustainable product and increase sales to wealthy Americans, Wool Partners International (WPI) unveiled a version of a clean, green wool brand carpet that is produced to specific standards of farming practice, animal welfare, sustainability and traceability. The goal is to land long-term contracts with carpet manufacturers and retailers. Wool prices have long been in decline and wool exports for 2009 through April fell 17 percent. WPI recently signed agreements to sell Laneve wool to San Francisco-based Bellbridge Carpets and Glen Eden Wool Carpet in Calhoun, Georgia. Elders Primary Wool signed a deal to directly supply giant US carpet retailer CCA Global Partners and five carpet manufacturers. Other deals with more overseas carpet makers are planning to be announced in coming months.

## SOUTH KOREA-SEOUL

### Firms That Don't Pass Test Forced To Fail

After the completion of a credit-risk evaluation performed by 18 creditor banks, the Financial Supervisory Service has said several small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with debts of 5 billion won to 50 billion won (\$3.89 million to \$38.9 million) will be subject to either restructure or closure. Of the 861 SMEs in that debt range, 77 received a grade of C- and 36 received a grade of D-. The 77 firms will be forced to undergo a workout process and the 36 firms will be forced out of business. And despite passing the first assessment, which included an analysis of items such as cash flow, interest coverage ratio, size of arrears and rollover ratio of notes, companies will face a second qualitative assessment, which will look at items such as risk positioning and marketing aspects, and which could push more companies into the C- and D- lists of companies. Lenders are planning to assess smaller companies with 3 billion won to 5 billion won in debt through September and companies with debts totaling 1 billion won to 3 billion won through November.

## TAIWAN-TAIPEI

### Hotels Want To Ease Tourist Restrictions

With an average of 950 Chinese tourists entering Taiwan per day in June down from 3,280 in April and 1,500 per day in late May, hoteliers are looking for the government to ease restrictions on individual tourists from China and promote domestic travel. So far bookings for August, usually the busiest month in the industry remain low and experts predict the hotel industry will have the worst performance in years. Currently, Taiwan only permits Chinese visitors in tour groups of a minimum of five people. Premier Liu Chao-shiuan has asked the Tourism Bureau to draft a proposal to submit to the Executive Yuan to allow individual visitors to visit the outlying islands and then ease restrictions to visit Taiwan proper at a later date.

## THE NETHERLANDS-AMSTERDAM

### Retail Turnover Drops Dramatically

Statistics Netherlands reports that retail turnover dropped significantly in May 2009 from the prior year with retail prices-led by a drop in gasoline prices-down by 0.6 percent. Retail turnover was down almost nine percent over May 2008 although once a correction was taken to account for fewer shopping days in May 2009, the retail turnover shrank by approximately six percent. Gas stations had the greatest turnover loss while food, drinks and tobacco shops saw their turnover shrink by over 3 percent. Only pharmacies managed to contain their losses.

## UK-LONDON

### OCS Recognized in Deloitte Top Track 100

International facilities services group OCS has again been listed in the Sunday Times Deloitte Top Track 100 privately owned businesses, raising its ranking in the league by 4 places despite the severe economic climate. Chris Cracknell said, "At OCS being a family business is about putting our responsibilities to our customers, our staff across the globe and the communities where we work into

practice. Our strong commitment to skills training is demonstrated by our being one of the first to sign up to the Skills Pledge framework to ensure our employees are given the best opportunities to maximize their potential and progress their career. Our recent triple accreditation with BSI (British Standards) for quality (ISO 9001:2000), environment (ISO 14001:2004) and Health and Safety (BS OHSAS 18001: cleaning only), is a statement to the caliber and capabilities of our staff and the importance we place on supporting the well-being of our people and the mitigation of climate change." Stuart Counsell, head of the private companies program, Deloitte, the title sponsor of the league program, commented, " There is no doubt that many businesses are facing tough, uncertain times. But the companies on this list have the potential to help provide the jobs and stability which the economy needs, as the country recovers from the recession." Ranked at 75 in the top 100 of Britain's biggest private companies, based on turnover, OCS employs 63,000 people worldwide and provides a comprehensive range of services including catering, cleaning, hygiene services, security, horticulture, pest control and waste management.



who was found wearing her work shirt and sweat-pants, had not been seen since her work shift and video surveillance indicated she had not left the building. She worked at a 26-story Manhattan tower a few blocks from the World Trade Center site where cameras cover every exit, and guards staff the lobby 24 hours a day. She was last seen on security videotape entering an elevator at the skyscraper. Her cleaning cart was found on the eighth floor. The 46-year-old woman worked on some vacant floors in the 400,000-square-foot (37,160-square-meter) building, and relatives said the emptiness had unsettled her and them.

## US-NORTH CAROLINA

### Cleaner Finds Remnants Of Meth Lab

**A**fter a cleaning employee at the Royal Inn & Suites hotel in Burlington, North Carolina, discovered a damaged room and found evidence of a fire and strong chemical odor, police indicated that the room was used as a possible portable meth lab and evacuated the hotel. The assistant police chief says the incident is most likely the first confirmed portable meth lab in Burlington although other surrounding agencies have investigated them.

## US-CONNECTICUT

### Custodians Add To Hazmat Spill

**A**fter custodians tried to alleviate fumes from a hydrogen peroxide spill by setting up fans, the fans sent the noxious odor throughout the Yale School of Nursing in New Haven. As a result, the first floor of the building was evacuated and seven people were sent to the hospital. Six staffers and a dialysis patient were transported to the hospital for treatment of irritated throats, abdominal pain, and nausea.

## US-NEW YORK

### Missing Cleaner Found Murdered

**T**he body of a missing cleaner was found bound and gagged and stuffed in a 12th-floor air-conditioning duct after police discovered blood leaking from a ventilation shaft. The cleaner,

### UPCOMING EVENTS

18th Congress of the World Federation of Building Service Contractors  
Auckland, New Zealand

Congress updates will be available at:  
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19th Congress of the World Federation of Building Service Contractors  
Curitiba, Brazil  
2012



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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