



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

PGI Ends Joint Venture

Polymer Group, Inc. located near Buenos Aires and one of the leading producers of nonwovens in the world, announced it has ended its joint venture, started in 1997 with partner, Guillermo E. Kraves by purchasing his remaining 40% minority stake in Dominion Nonwovens Sudamericana, S.A. (PGI Argentina). Terms of the transaction were not disclosed. PGI purchased a majority share of the business in 1999 and has been focused on growing the business in the Mercosur as part of its overall hygiene leadership strategy in Latin America. The company operates 14 manufacturing and converting facilities in eight countries throughout the world.

AUSTRALIA-VICTORIA

BSCAA Celebrates Industry With Awards

The Agar Excellence Awards were hosted in Sydney by the Building Service Contractors' Association of Australia New South Wales branch. BSCAA NSW president, Terry Corby, and major sponsor, Agar Cleaning Systems, noted the positive nature of the awards, which recognize employees and promote the cleaning industry. Over 140 industry representatives attended the awards luncheon. The Company winner was Assetlink Services and the Young Manager's Award went to Adam Atkin of Linway.

BELGIUM-BRUSSELS

Swine Flu Deaths Multiplying

According to the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), Europe is entering an acceleration phase of the H1N1 outbreak with deaths doubling over the week prior. Eighty-four people in 31 European Union and European Free Trade Association countries died from swine flu the first week of November, compared with 43 the week before. The problem is more acute in the northern countries such as Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland and the Netherlands. A total of 414 people in Europe have died from since H1N1 first came on the scene in early 2009 with the majority, 155, occurring in the UK. Almost 80 percent of all cases in Europe fell in the age category under 30.

BRAZIL-SAO PAULO

Blackout Raises Concerns

The Brazilian Center for Infrastructure is worried that its aging electricity sector won't be able to sustain the power supply in Brazil as the country prepares for the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics as well as surging economic growth. The recent blackout resulted in a four-hour power failure in 18 of 26 states in Brazil and almost all of Paraguay. Water and sewer were also affected. It was the first time that the world's largest dam by output, Itaipu, was forcibly shut down since going online in 1983.

The dam meets 20 percent of Brazil's energy needs, and 90 percent of Paraguay's. The power failure had significant infrastructure impacts. Authorities closed Rio de Janeiro's international airport, the subway systems in Sao Paulo and Rio, the nation's largest cities, were shut down and traffic snarled to a halt in the city of Sao Paulo, where traffic lights at 65 intersections went dark.

CANADA-OTTAWA

H1N1 Causing Bed Shortage

The Ottawa Hospital was at 105 percent capacity as a result of the H1N1 outbreak in Canada forcing surgeries to be cancelled and patients to be tended to in the hallways of the facility. The emergency rooms are seeing a 40 percent increase in visits, and an increase in the number of patients admitted. In addition, transferring patients to long-term care is impossible and leading to the capacity problem as long-term care facilities are refusing new admissions as a result of the outbreak.

FRANCE-PARIS

France Asked To Cut Spending

The European Union's executive body, the European Commission, is expected to recommend that France slow down its public spending in face of predictions that the GDP deficit in 2009 will be 8.3 percent. The EC predicts an additional 5 percent deficit in 2013 if France does not accelerate cost-cutting measures. The commission is strongly cautioning France not to raise taxes, which are among the highest in the European Union but to cut national healthcare and local government expenses to fund its reserves and public spending.

GERMANY-BERLIN

Call For Five Year Terms

The German Justice Minister, citing lack of time to get things accomplished has asked for an extension for the term of the Bundestag, Germany's lower house, from four years to

five years. Supporters point to some German states and the EU parliament as having five year terms. Britain and France's parliaments are also elected for five year terms.

JAPAN-TOKYO

Ministry Seeking To Simplify Car Tax

Seeking to simplify the taxes on vehicles and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the Internal Affairs Ministry is investigating taking the national and local vehicle taxes and turning them into one environmental tax. The Ministry will also address allocating income from the unified tax to fund the general-account budgets of local-level authorities. The plan is to make the new tax effective around April 2011.

NEW ZEALAND-AUCKLAND

Food Outlets Receive Low Hygiene Grades

The Waitakere City Council gave a McDonald's restaurant at the Westgate shopping centre in West Auckland a D-hygiene rating for not following proper hygiene procedures.

According to environmental inspectors, the D-grade is usually linked to staff not following procedures for cleaning. Several other firms were given D-grades for cleanliness and food storage issues, insufficient staff hygiene training and dead cockroaches on the premises. The affected firms can be regraded after a two-month obligatory stand-down. Waitakere, Auckland City and Manukau city councils each use slightly different wording to accompany their grades, but A means a high level of compliance with health regulations, B a moderate level of compliance and D unsatisfactory compliance. An outlet with an E grade can be prosecuted and may not be allowed to reopen for at least two months. Inspectors noted that they are seeing less D and E-grades due to stringent monitoring and strict standards with only 1.6 percent out of 1350 premises receiving low grades. Waitakere has seven outlets with D ratings, and none with Es, and Auckland City Council has 66 premises with D grades and 37 with Es. Manukau has 14 E-graded premises and 27 with D grades.

SOUTH KOREA-SEOUL

Over 90 Percent Have Mobile Phones

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) released a report showing that the number of mobile phone subscribers in South Korea reached 43.5 million in 2007. Over 90 percent of Koreans have access to mobile phone service making the subscription rate the eighth largest rate in the Asia Pacific region. Five years previously, a little fewer than 70 percent had mobile phone subscriptions. According to the study, Macau had the highest subscription rate with 165.1 subscribers per hundred residents. Macau was trailed by Hong Kong, which had 149.2 subscribers per 100 people, while numbers for Singapore and Thailand stood at 133.5 and 123.8, respectively.

TAIWAN-TAIPEI

Trade Group Signs MOU

After experiencing success at the annual trade show in Nanjing, China, the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) signed a Memorandum Of Understanding with the Nanjing City government to set up a 'Taiwan Brand Street' and a supply center devoted to promoting and selling Taiwanese goods each year at the fair. The trade show, co-organized by the Nanjing City Government and Taipei World Trade Center for the first time, generated \$750 million in four days with almost 268,000 attendees and over 1,900 exhibition booths – more than six times the 300 booths in the original plan.

THE NETHERLANDS-AMSTERDAM

Vacancies Experience Substantial Drop

According to the latest figures from Statistics Netherlands, unfilled vacancies numbered 128,000 at the end of the third quarter of 2009, a substantial drop from a record high number of vacancies within the same period of 2007. The number of vacancies has appeared to have stabilized within the past year and indicates a positive

trend although it is too early to determine if the country has reached a turning point. The stabilization applies across the board. The number of vacancies in commercial services, which includes trade and business services, remains about the same as in the previous quarter, namely 66 thousand. The vacancy rate also indicates a positive trend with 16 vacancies per thousand jobs in September 2009, half of what it was at the end of September 2008.

UK-LONDON

Dispelling Cleaning Myths

Increasingly sustainability is an important issue both in terms of environmental impact and energy use. With regard to energy use the choice of laundry product we make is, according to the experts, only 20% of the process. How we use the products has the most impact on sustainability. The reality is that, by law, all detergents have to be biodegradable and safe for the environment. So there goes myth number one. Myth number two: choice of product matters most. Selecting lower temperature washes, for example, 30 degree not 40 or higher on the washing machine, affects sustainability far more than what you buy. The same is true when it comes to how much of a product you use: choosing to use less each time will also have a positive effect. Now for myth number three: more is better. Again, untrue. Less is actually more. To optimize performance, it is a good idea to read the instructions on the laundry product label.

UK-LONDON

Training Prisoners For A Second Chance

It is well known convicts find it hard settling into life outside bars. Now one man is trying to change that. Cleaning executive Lloyd Ansermoz, Chair of the Asset Skills Cleaning Board, is helping train prisoners in everyday work skills while they are still in jail. He hopes to offer them jobs on the premise everyone deserves a second chance. Ansermoz is involved in a scheme that teaches inmates at Birmingham Prison the skills of professional cleaning. There is a big shortage of cleaners with many British people snubbing the job. A survey by Asset Skills showed 37% of cleaning firms used migrant workers and now ex-offenders are being recruited to help plug the gap.

UK-LONDON

Reality TV Star Lends Support to HSE

Professional builder and Big Brother reality TV show star, Craig Phillips, recently gave his support to the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) ladder safety campaign for 2009. The campaign centers on a ladder exchange, which gives everyone the opportunity to get rid of old, damaged and broken ladders and trade them for new ones. Over 5,000 ladders have been exchanged under the program. In 2007/08 a total of 58 workers died and over 3,600 employees suffered major injury as a result of a fall from height in the workplace. Many of these incidents could be avoided by using the right equipment and taking simple precautions. The ladder exchange program is one part of HSE's ongoing Shattered Lives campaign, which aims to reduce the number of fatal and major injuries each year that result from falling from a height. The exchange discount can be up to 50 percent off and ladders can be exchanged at any of the partner retail outlets. For more information go to www.hse.gov.uk/shatteredlives.

US-CALIFORNIA

Clorox Removing Chlorine From Its Bleach

As a result of increasing concern over the transportation of chlorine via railroad, the Clorox Company has announced it will stop using chlorine in its bleach product starting at its main factory in Fairfield, California. The shipping of chlorine and other potentially hazardous chemicals via freight rail has come under greater scrutiny in recent years following fatal accidents.

US-DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

New Pesticide Labeling Proposed

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing new instructions for pesticide labeling that will make labels clearer and more consistent in the effort to reduce off-target spray and dust drift. In addition, the EPA plans to study exposure and risk of various pesticides based upon individual use patterns. The research will help determine whether no-spray buffer zones or other measures such as restrictions on droplet or particle size, nozzle height, or weather conditions are needed to protect

from potential harm. More information: go to docket EPAHQOPP20090628 at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

US-MASSACHUSETTS

Careless Employee Causes Chlorine Cloud

When an employee at the Louisiana Physical Therapy and Family Fitness Center in Opelousas, improperly dumped used chlorine tablets in a trash can and another employee threw some cleaning fluids in the same can later that day, the resulting toxic gas cloud forced the evacuation of about 15 people from the building. The fire department used large fans to clear the area and the facility was back in operation by 1 p.m.

US-NEW YORK

Toxic Chemical Mix Used To Commit Suicide

A 21-year old man and a 22-year old man died less than a week apart from each other and while authorities have yet to determine if the two deaths are related, both men used a lethal mix of household chemicals to create hydrogen sulfide gas, which they inhaled while seated in their respective cars. Each man left a sign on his car window warning emergency crews not to open the doors because of toxic fumes.

UPCOMING EVENTS

18th Congress of the World Federation of Building Service Contractors

Auckland, New Zealand
February 6-12, 2011

Congress updates will be available at:
BSCNZ PO Box 31-067, Lower Hutt 5040
EMAIL: info@bsc.org.nz
WEBSITE: www.bsc.org.nz

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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