



The Masonry Update

what's happening in the masonry industry in New Jersey

NEWS FLASH: MARCH 16, 2021

NJ Has More COVID-19 Workplace Lawsuits per Capita than Any Other State

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, New Jersey leads the nation for COVID related workplace lawsuits per capita according to a recent [New Jersey Herald report](#). More than 1,400 cases have been filed nationwide and some lawyers see no end in sight.

New Jersey's high rate of COVID lawsuits may be traced to its strong worker protections and a series of executive orders by Governor Phil Murphy.

Construction Workers Are Among Least Likely to Seek Vaccine

Construction workers are the fourth group from the bottom in industry rankings that said they would get the COVID-19 vaccine if offered to them, just 53% said they'd willingly roll up their sleeves for the shot. [ConstructionDive article](#)

CPWR Tips: Increase Ventilation on Indoor Jobsites Without Operating HVAC Systems

CPWR recently provided preliminary guidance on how to improve ventilation, as part of a layered approach with other measures, to reduce the risk of COVID-19. [Tips to improve ventilation](#)

[All COVID-19 Resource Links can be found on our website](#)

GOVERNMENT NEWS

American Rescue Plan Act of 2021

On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed [H.R. 1319: American Rescue Plan Act of 2021](#) into law. The \$1.9 trillion bill includes a third round of stimulus checks, extended unemployment benefits, as well as changes to tax credits and the Affordable Care Act (ACA). [Forbes: Here's How It'll Affect You](#)

NJDOL Investigates: Contractor owes \$1.2M in Unpaid Wages

Three Sons Restoration of Union, NJ, was assessed approximately \$2.75 million in back wages, penalties and fees. After investigating six jobsites the NJDOL found that the contractor failed to pay employees the prevailing wage. Assistant Commissioner Joseph Petrecca of the Division of Wage and Hour Compliance is quoted as saying "It is theft and it is unlawful. It is our job to protect our workers from those who refuse to treat their employees fairly and in accordance with the law."

As of December 2020, Three Sons Restoration has been disbarred from bidding on or engaging in any public works projects for three years. [NJDOL Press Release](#)

CMU Checkoff Update

Check out the [February 2021 CMU Checkoff Update](#), including information on these topics:

- Assessment rate and when increases will occur,
- Regions and Board Membership,
- Product Scope,
- Program Vision

OSHA Raises Penalties, Establishes New Debt Collection Procedures

OSHA has raised its maximum civil penalty amounts for 2021 according to the rate of inflation. The new penalties were effective January 15, 2021. The Agency also announced they are changing the way it collects penalties.

[ConstructionDive article](#); [OSHA Trade Release](#)

COVID National Emphasis Program Enforcement Plan Introduced by OSHA

The new program, currently slated to last one year, will prioritize onsite inspections aimed at companies that put the largest number of workers at risk for exposure to COVID in response to an Executive Order from President Joe Biden.

[ConstructionDive article](#); [OSHA Directive Number: DIR 2021-01 \(CPL-03\)](#)

IRS Issues Guidance on 2020 Employee Retention Credit, Including Eligibility Rules for PPP Borrowers

On March 1, 2021 the IRS issued Notice 2021-20, which provides updated guidance on the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) under the CARES Act as modified under the Relief Act for calendar quarters in 2020. The guidance includes clarification and describes retroactive changes under the new law applicable to 2020, primarily relating to expanded eligibility for credit.

A significant change for 2020 made by the Relief Act permits eligible employers that received a PPP loan to claim the ERTC, although wages cannot be counted for both forgiveness of the PPP loan and the ERTC. The Notice explains how and when these employers can claim the ERTC for 2020. [IRS News Release](#)

CONSTRUCTION NEWS

Dodge Data & Analytics

In early February, [Dodge reported](#) that construction starts in January 2021 dropped 4% to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of \$794.3 billion. Non-residential building starts were flat in January, while non-building starts dropped 10% and residential starts were 4% lower. From a regional perspective, starts were lower in three of the five regions – the Midwest, South Atlantic, and South Central. Starts rose, however, in the Northeast and West.

The [Dodge Momentum Index](#), a monthly measure of the first report for non-residential building projects in planning, rose 7.1 % in February. On March 5, 2021 Dodge reported “Dodge Momentum Index Posts Strong Gain in February Marking Highest Level in Nearly Three Years.” The index has been shown to lead construction spending for non-residential buildings by a year.

New Jersey’s Unemployment Rate Moves Lower to 7.6 Percent

New Jersey’s most current employment data was released on January 21, 2021. The state’s unemployment rate fell by 2.6 percentage points to 7.6 percent in December, primarily due to residents leaving the labor force rather than finding employment. The national unemployment rate for December was 6.7 percent.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that in December, the largest unemployment rate decreases occurred in New Jersey (-2.6 percentage points) and Arkansas (-2.1 points).

In December in New Jersey, the construction sector recorded employment increases of +3,100, 149,900 in December 2020 compared to 146,800 in November. Employment decreases were recorded in only four out of nine major private

Architectural Billings Index (ABI)

The [*January 2021 ABI*](#) (published by AIA on February 24, 2021) reports a slight improvement in business conditions which has led to fewer architecture firms reporting declining billings. Current Billings are slightly up with a score of 44.9 in January compared to 42.3 in December, while Design Contracts scored 48.8 compared to December's score of 47.0.

While Architecture firms' billings experienced disappointing, declining billings in December and despite January's score of 44.9 there is optimism for future work improving. New work inquiries reached its highest level since the pandemic began and new design contracts showed growth.

Business conditions for firms in our Northeast region are slowly climbing up, closer to pre-pandemic levels, with a current score of 41.9.

EARN LU/HSWs

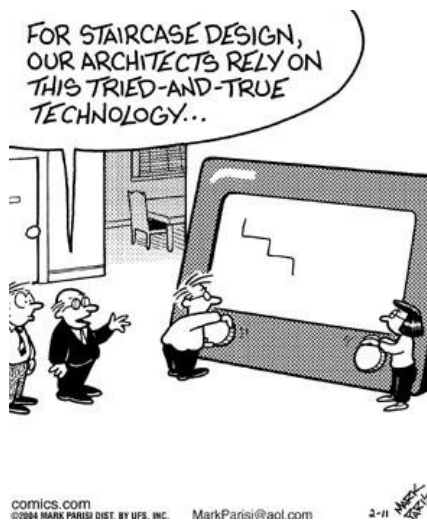


Vendor and Manufacturer Series:
[03/25: Design and Detailing of Reinforced Hollow Clay Masonry](#)

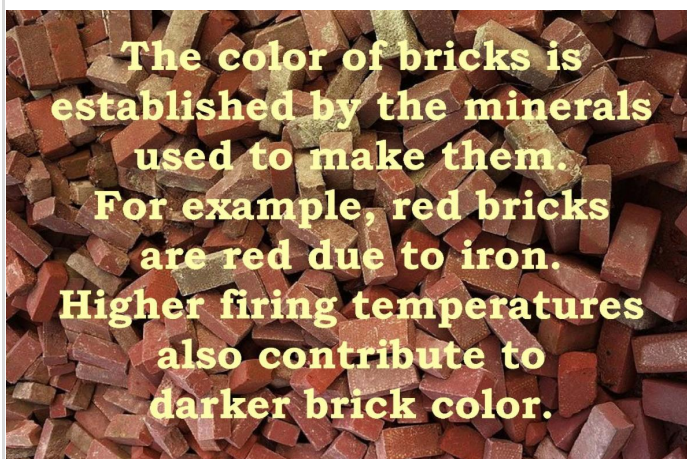
Masonry, Tile, and Restoration Education:
[04/06: Anchored Veneer Masonry: A 3D Experience](#)

Structural Masonry Series:
[04/14: System Selection: Masonry Works with All Structural Systems](#)

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE



Masonry Trivia



Dedicated to promoting Masonry Design and Union Construction throughout the State of New Jersey

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