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NEIGHBORS

A SERVICE OF ASH GROVE CEMENT COMPANY – MIDLOTHIAN PLANT | SPRING 2011

Midlothian earns International Environmental Certification

Ash Grove Cement Midlothian earned ISO 14001 certification in 2010. In fact, Ash Grove is on the verge of becoming the only domestic cement manufacturer to have its entire fleet of eight plants earn this designation. The company's new Foreman, Ark., plant is on track to earn it in 2011.

The certification, administered by the International Organization of Standardization (ISO), requires companies to adopt rigorous, systematic environmental management systems customized to the needs unique to their facilities and subject to continuous improvement. *(continued on page 2)*



ISO Certification

Employees and Foundation Donate to United Way

Ash Grove Cement Midlothian was pleased to donate more than \$13,000 to its community United Way. The donation included contributions from the plant's

A NOTE FROM KEVIN BLANKENSHIP, PLANT MANAGER



Kevin Blankenship,
plant manager

The loyalty, high morale, safety and efficient performance of Ash Grove Cement Midlothian employees breaks through the gloom of an economy that continues to be difficult.

Total construction spending across the U.S., continued to trend downward in 2010, with total spending about 7 percent below that in 2009, and national cement shipment volumes at about the same level as 2009. For the second year, we made the hard decision to temporarily furlough employees in order to ensure the long-term viability of the company here in Midlothian and at other Ash Grove plants. All 71 of our furloughed employees returned to work Jan. 6, 2011, after four weeks, and we couldn't be happier to have everyone back and doing great work together.

It's in this environment that our employees are doing their best work. All employees are doing all they can to meet their responsibilities, work more safely than ever before, manage costs and do all they can to help the company. In 2010, Ash Grove Cement Midlothian had the best safety year in its history – no reportable doctor visits, no lost-time accidents, no MSHA reportable events.

You can read elsewhere in this newsletter about our employees receiving the L.T. Sunderland Safety Excellence Award and the Ash Grove President's Gold Safety Award, both for 2010, as well as receiving the Portland Cement Association (PCA) Innovation in Safety Award for the third year in a row.

We have the best employees in the world, and I am very proud of them.

We will need to be at our best as the sluggish economy and emerging regulatory initiatives continue to challenge the financial viability of the domestic cement industry. The PCA's forecasts for 2011 project construction spending to remain flat with 2010 levels and the resulting portland cement demand also remaining flat.

The company is focused on holding market share and, *(continued on page 2)*

employees and matching dollars from Ash Grove's Sunderland Foundation.

"We are proud to support United Way of Ellis County in its efforts to help those in need in our community," said Kevin Blankenship, plant manager.

Casey Ballard, United Way executive director, said the Ellis County United Way

does not accept any public dollars and depends solely on contributions from area businesses and their employees to provide the services that make the area a stronger, healthier place to live.

"Ash Grove has been a strong supporter of United Way for many, many years," Ballard said. "Each year, we know we *(continued on back cover)*

Plants Welcomes Returning National Guardsman

Herbert (Hub) Wooldridge joined the National Guard a few months after he started in the maintenance department at the Midlothian plant in August 1995. Since that time, not only has Hub dedicated a weekend a month and three weeks each summer for training, he has deployed twice to Iraq, returning to Fort Hood, Texas, to train soldiers preparing for their overseas deployment.

For each training or deployment, Ash Grove held Hub's job for him. "When an employee has to leave to serve our country, of course we will hold a spot for whenever that person returns," said Matt Kertz, maintenance supervisor, and Hub's supervisor. "We cross train continually to manage when anyone is out for illness or vacation, so that there is

always someone who can step into that role, and we don't miss a beat."

In his first tour of duty, Hub provided force protection, manning gates and towers. On his second tour, he provided security for eight to 10 hours a day, escorting contractors driving 18-wheelers filled with supplies.

With his deployment and training duties at Fort Hood, Hub was gone a total of 56 months from the plant since 2004. One thing that was emphasized in both roles, Hub said, was safety. "(In Iraq), you have to guard against complacency, always stay motivated, keep your mind focused on the job at hand, just like here at the plant," he said. "You have to keep your mind on what you are doing and be as safe as you can."

Kertz said safety is priority No. 1. "We have a job training matrix for each employee," he said. "We know what each person has been trained on as they progress through each area. For someone gone as long as Hub, we treat him just as if he joined the department once again, make sure we don't miss anything and take all the time he needs. We don't mind spending the extra time to make sure each person can do a job well and safely."

Hub said he appreciated the support shown him by the plant and shown to his family by friends and neighbors while he was away. After 23 years in the service, nearly nine years full time, he retired from the military Jan. 4, 2011. ■



Herbert (Hub) Wooldridge and Matt Kertz



Herbert (Hub) Wooldridge's National Guard unit

A Note From Kevin Blankenship

(continued from front cover)

with efficient plants, low overhead and low cost of capital, being the low-cost producer in each market. So, we at Ash Grove Midlothian will continue to dedicate ourselves to the work at hand: maintaining the utmost safety for our community, our employees and our plant; minimizing the impact of cement production on the environment; and meeting our production goals with the highest quality product possible. ■

**We have the best employees in the world,
and I am very proud of them.**

Midlothian earns ISO Certification

(continued from front cover)

Once such a program is implemented, certified third-party auditors conduct an extensive audit to verify compliance with the ISO standards before certification is granted.

Achieving this international certification is the latest in a series of initiatives that reflect Ash Grove's commitment to good environmental stewardship – lowering emissions and other environmental impacts related to the company's operations.

Ash Grove's Energy Management (AGem) program was implemented in the first quarter of 2008. It is doing well towards reducing emissions and costs based on plant-specific benchmarks established when the program was conceived in 2007. ■

EMPLOYEE MENTORING AND TUTORING PROGRAM

Graduates to Middle School

In 2008, plant manager Kevin Blankenship met with Cherie Wagoner, principal of J.A. Vitovsky Elementary school, to offer assistance from Ash Grove Cement Midlothian employees. "Cherie said she wanted to start a mentoring and tutoring program for the school's students, and the plant is in its third year of involvement now," he said.

Blankenship said that he and plant employees David Fisher, production manager; Brian Howell, HR/safety manager; and Francisco Pinto, manager of community and environmental affairs, are current volunteers in the program with some of the volunteers following their elementary students to middle school as they graduate to Walnut Grove Middle School.

Each mentor is assigned one student with whom they meet once a week. As tutors, they visit a classroom every other week and take turns tutoring small groups of students on math and reading skills.

"J.A. Vitovsky has one of the highest, at-risk student populations in the district," said Florence Foster, community liaison for the school. "We're in our third year with Ash Grove involved in the program, and we are very grateful for their time and commitment and for caring about our children."

Foster said campus staff identifies the students who would benefit from mentoring and tutoring, and then she matches them with volunteers from the community. Those paired with a student first undergo an extensive background check and thorough training. "Businesses have a vested interest in seeing our children educated and graduating from school because they will be in the workforce," she added. "For the students, mentoring makes a tremendous difference in their behavior, academics as well as attendance. We need more mentors."

Pinto has continued to mentor his student after the student graduated to middle school. Pinto said the focus has evolved from getting to know the student and his friends, focusing on good behavior choices and celebrating accomplishments, to include a focus on academics. "When I was his age, I never looked forward to having a grownup go over my grades with me," Pinto said, "so I was pleasantly surprised when he started to remind me and ask me to go over his grades with him." ■



Photos top, left to right: Dena Petty, coordinator of the mentoring program at the high school and Kevin Blankenship; David Fisher, tutoring at the elementary school; Midlothian plant.

MIT Study Touts Advantages of Concrete

The Concrete Sustainability Hub of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) released a December 2010 interim report on the life cycle performance of concrete as it compares to other materials and their global warming potential, and the news is good.

As the report said, "Because of the enormous environmental and economic impact of infrastructure in the United States, there is a growing need to better understand the life cycle performance of structures and to investigate methods of reducing their global warming potential. Over the last year, MIT researchers have created new models to quantify the life cycle carbon emissions, from manufacturing to disposal for a variety of structures."

The reports, presented on both pavement and buildings, indicate that concrete delivers greater fuel efficiency for vehicles driving on concrete pavements and potential energy saving and lower life cycle carbon emissions for buildings.

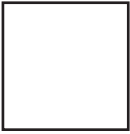
In the pavement study, a comparative analysis was made of the carbon emissions of asphalt concrete and portland cement concrete pavements through life cycle assessment. The goal was to quantify the carbon emissions associated with pavement material selection over a 50-year lifetime, including maintenance and differences in fuel consumption. Among the advantages found:

- For a high traffic volume highway, the potentially greater fuel efficiency of vehicles driving on concrete pavements could lead to significantly lower life cycle carbon emissions compared to an asphalt pavement. ■



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Kevin Blankenship, Dr. Harold Nolte, chair, United Way Board of Directors and Casey Ballard, United Way executive director

United Way

(continued from front cover)

can count on them to run a significant campaign at their plant. The company genuinely believes in the importance of giving.”

United Way of Ellis County will support 28 non-profit agencies in 2011, Ballard added, which serve senior citizens daily meals, assist local families in crisis with financial assistance, deliver student programs on the dangers of drugs and alcohol, provide preventative dental care to elementary students and offer other programs. ■

MIDLOTHIAN TOPS IN SAFETY INNOVATION AGAIN

For the third year in a row, Ash Grove Cement Midlothian has received the Portland Cement Association’s (PCA) Innovation in Safety Award. Utility supervisor Jason McBride submitted the idea that captured the recognition for 2010. McBride’s idea uses one worker to operate a jig and hydraulic press to connect large, four-foot chain link sections.

“This award is for ideas that improve the health, safety and well-being of employees in the plant,” said Steve Minshall, Ash Grove’s corporate health and safety director. “It has to be unique and easily adaptable to locations other than the originating plant so that others might benefit from it.”

Minshall said receiving the Innovations in Safety Award three years running was unusual and speaks to a culture of proactive safety awareness and problem solving. The plant also received the L.T. Sunderland Safety Excellence Award and Ash Grove President’s Gold Safety Award, both for 2010. “This plant has successfully distributed ownership of safety throughout its entire employee community,” Minshall added. “It is not just the responsibility of the safety manager, it belongs to everyone.” ■



The PCA Innovation in Safety Award winning entry. Shown is the jig and hydraulic press in place ready to press on a side plate.