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Sustainability, MSHA enforcement, logistics featured at 2008 PMD Spring Meeting

Nearly twenty pulverized calcium carbonate industry leaders, including marketing, technical, and regulatory compliance professionals, and other senior executives, gathered in Las Vegas earlier this month for PMD's 2008 Spring Meeting. Speakers at the March 10 conference covered topics ranging from global warming to

MSHA ACRI Training Just for PMD Members!

We're pleased to announce that NSSGA is organizing a special training class for PMD members on the Mine Safety and Health Administration's (MSHA) Alternative Case Resolution Initiative (ACRI). The ACRI program is a mechanism for mine operators to dispute certain citations and "litigate" cases against ACRI-trained, non-attorney MSHA personnel.

This special ACRI workshop will provide PMD members with the skills necessary to participate in the ACRI process without outside legal representation. Mark Savit, an experienced mining industry attorney with the Washington, D.C.-based firm Patton Boggs L.L.P., will provide information on organizing and presenting legal arguments, understanding the basic principles of MSHA law, legal research techniques, and procedures to be followed during litigation.

Mark your calendars: The three-day class will take place in Denver on July 28, 29, and 30. The cost will be \$495 for PMD/NSSGA members and \$600 for nonmembers. Watch your e-mail for more information.

small particle characterization, and everything in between. Two-thirds of PMD's members were represented.

Sustainability and climate change in the spotlight

The meeting began with a presentation by John Disharoon, manager of sustainable development for Caterpillar, Inc (CAT). Disharoon described the leadership role that his company is playing in the policy debate over global warming in Washington, D.C. and the reason CAT favors a national "cap and trade" program. Disharoon also explained how Caterpillar, through tremendous investment in research and development, is turning environmentally-friendly technology into an important profit center. He cited the example of a coal mine in China where CAT machinery is turning methane (which in the past would simply have been burned off, yielding no benefit) into electricity to run the mine.

As part of the morning's focus on sustainability, Disharoon was followed by Derek Young, manager of corporate social responsibility (CSR) for Aggregate Industries and chairman of NSSGA's newly-formed Climate Impact Task Force. Young described how his

company has combined community engagement, sustainability, sustainable construction, and workforce development into a comprehensive CSR program. Young said that his company is already realizing

PMD Newsline

March 31, 2008

Page 2 of 3

bottom-line business benefits from implementing a CSR program. These include improved financial performance, reduced operating costs, enhanced brand image and reputation, increased sales and customer loyalty, increased productivity and quality, increased ability to attract and retain employees, reduced regulatory oversight, and new access to capital.

Along with NSSGA Vice President of Environmental Services John Hayden, Young described NSSGA's activities on the climate change front. The task force will provide a streamlined and more effective means of managing the issue for NSSGA. It will also give NSSGA staff access to industry experts who can provide counsel and recommendations to help guide the association's climate change activities.

PMD committees set 2008 objectives

After a networking break, the conference resumed with meetings of PMD's three standing committees. Every meeting attendee was encouraged to participate in a committee meeting, regardless of whether or not he or she was formally a committee member.

The Technical Committee, chaired by Bob Baker (J.M Huber) discussed ongoing updates to the *NSSGA Aggregate Handbook* and the possibility of hosting a special PMD "technology transfer" conference to help workers who have recently entered the calcium carbonate industry take advantage of the accumulated knowledge of their more experienced peers.

NSSGA Vice President of Government Affairs Pam Whitted briefed members of the PMD Government Affairs Committee about the issues that NSSGA's lobbying team is tackling on Capitol Hill, including the S-MINER bill and asbestos legislation. The Committee, led by immediate-past PMD Chairman Reed Sherar (Columbia River Carbonates) discussed ways to build a more consistent culture of PMD participation in NSSGA's legislative program and elevate the visibility of legislative issues affecting PMD members. The Committee will work to create a tool kit to help PMD members become more active in grassroots lobbying.

PMD's Environment and Regulatory Committee, which is chaired by Doug Townsend (Carmeuse Lime and Stone), focused its discussions on the Mine Safety and Health Administration's (MSHA) new, more aggressive enforcement policies. The Committee agreed to work to organize a special training seminar this year to help educate PMD members about how to more effectively participate in the MSHA Alternative Case Resolution Initiative (ACRI) process. The training will take place on July 28, 29, and 30 in Denver. PMD members will be sent registration information in the coming weeks.

New economic stimulus law can help cut your tax bill, Klein tells group

After a networking lunch, PMD Facilitator Christian Klein gave the group a quick overview of the temporary capital investment incentives in the newly-enacted Economic Stimulus Act. The legislation reinstates a 50 percent depreciation bonus for new equipment purchases made in 2008. The new law also increases the Sec. 179 expensing level and phase-out threshold to \$250,000 and \$800,000 respectively. Klein told the group that more information about the Economic Stimulus Act, including a tax savings calculator, is available at <http://www.depreciationbonus.org>.

Without new investment, rail capacity problems will get worse

Mike Darragh, director of mined minerals for CSX Corporation, gave PMD members an update on the capacity challenges facing the railroad industry. He said that the use of freight rail has increased in recent

PMD Newsline

March 31, 2008

Page 3 of 3

years, putting pressure on existing capacity. He said that railroads are improving the efficiency of the system by making massive investments in equipment and infrastructure, employing newer, more powerful locomotives, better coordinating with customers, and putting new technologies in place. However, Darragh told the group, freight rail infrastructure will require \$135 billion in investment through 2035 to prevent capacity problems from getting worse. He said that the railroads are working with Congress to enact a 25 percent tax credit for investments that expand capacity; however, given current budget pressures on Capitol Hill, the outlook for the legislation is uncertain. Darragh expressed sympathy for the logistics challenges confronting PMD members that rely on rail, but he warned against reregulating the railroad industry, saying that although doing so might reduce rates for some shippers, the ultimate result would be lost profitability, disinvestment, and less rail capacity at the precise time that more capacity needs to be added.

A new look at particle size measurement technology

Following an update by Hayden and NSSGA Vice President of Safety Services Tom Harman about recent regulatory developments on the mine safety and environmental fronts, the group heard a presentation from Beckman Coulter's Ren Xu about recent advances in dry module laser particle analysis technology. Xu described the challenges associated with accurately measuring particles with varying shapes. He explained that although there are hundreds of ways to measure particle size, laser diffraction is rapidly gaining popularity for a number of reasons. It's flexible (able to measure dry powders, suspensions, and emulsions); a single instrument can be used to measure a wide variety of sizes (from 0.04 to 2000 microns); the measuring process is fast (generally only taking a few minutes); the results of the test are easily repeatable; no calibration is necessary; and the test methodology is widely accepted.

The day concluded with a reception hosted by Franklin Industrial Minerals that provided meeting attendees with the opportunity to network and relax with industry colleagues

Many of the presentations from the 2008 PMD Spring Meeting are available on PMD's Web site at <http://www.nssga.org/pmdivision/>.

Planning is already underway for PMD's Annual Meeting, which will take place at NSSGA headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia the week of October 6th. If you have ideas for topics or speakers you'd like see on the agenda, let us know.