



Western News

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 24, 2011

YWC Board Meeting
Marriott Suites
Seattle, WA

July 20-22, 2011

WBMA Board Meeting
Coeur d'Alene, ID

February 8-10, 2012

WBMA Convention
Tulalip Resort
Marysville, WA

February 9-11, 2012

YWC Conference
Tulalip Resort
Marysville, WA

2011 Link Scholarship Winners

Casey Coffman - Western Wood Preserving - Sumner, WA
Blake Jacobs - Jacobs Lumber - Kamiah, ID
Brook Jacobs - Jacobs Lumber - Kamiah, ID
Sophie Kangas - ProBuild - Longview, WA

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Joint Center's Housing Report Out Today

After years of pronouncements that short-term pain would be followed by long-term gain in the housing economy, an annual industry benchmark out today from the Harvard University Joint Center for Housing Studies paints a more guarded, hedged view of the fundamental, the psychological, and the theoretical forces that could tip housing into a sustained rebound.

With eyes wide open on the statistical realities of delayed household formations, excess vacancies, and impediments to home finance, the new analysis outlines its sharpest articulation of uncertainty around an assumption that has gained traction during the protracted slump: that homeownership motivation is ebbing. The report notes, "It is unclear how strongly attitudes toward homeownership have become more negative. According to a Fannie Mae survey, the share of renters believing that buying a home is a safe investment is sharply lower than in 2003, and even fell over the course of 2010. This is not surprising given the plunge in home prices over the past five years as well as the dramatic increase in owners that have lost all their home equity.

Even so, some 74 percent of renters still agreed, as of the first quarter of 2011, that owning a home makes more financial sense than renting, as did 87 percent of the overall U.S. population. And when asked if now is a good time to buy, the shares of both renters and owners responding yes were similar to the shares in 2003. Most Americans thus still prefer to own their homes and perceive that today's lower home prices and low mortgage interest rates provide a buying opportunity." So? Keep on working through it is all. *Source: Builder Pulse, June 6, 2011*

EPA to Review Testing Requirements

Last week, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released its list of regulations it would review to make them less burdensome and costly for businesses in response to President Obama's recent Executive Order 13563 requiring all federal agencies to conduct such a review.

While NLBMDA has urged EPA to reconsider a number of issues related to the EPA Lead: Renovation, Repair and Painting (LEEP) Rule, the agency appears to be limiting its review to the existing work activity testing requirements and the pending LRRP clearance testing proposed rule, which is expected to be finalized this summer.

The clearance testing proposal would expand the LRRP by establishing additional requirements to ensure that renovation work areas are adequately cleaned after renovation work is finished and before the areas are re-occupied. These additional requirements could include expensive multiple dust wipe tests through EPA-approved labs after renovations are completed and depending on the type of renovation work, ensuring that the renovation work areas meet stringent clearance standards before re-occupancy.

Housing Market Continues to Disappoint

The housing market continued to disappoint in April, with a marked decline in housing starts and some slippage in existing home sales. Housing starts have been bouncing along the bottom since June of 2010. Builders cite the lack of credit for buyers and builders as the primary hurdle in the market. Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation data supports the builder credit shortage — showing single-family acquisition, development and construction (AD&C) lending down 73% over the past three years compared to a 45% drop in all commercial real estate lending.

Weak housing demand, along with a high volume of foreclosures and distressed sales, continues to have an adverse impact on house prices, with the Federal Housing Finance Agency house price index down 2.5% in first quarter of 2011 and 5.5% year-over-year. The monthly data provide some hope that the downward pressure on house prices is easing, with the overall rate of decline slowing and prices ticking up in four of the nine Census divisions in March. In addition, foreclosures and seriously delinquent homes are beginning to trend down, reducing the downward pressure on house prices.

At the same time home buyers are bargaining for lower prices, builders are facing increasing costs. The producer price and consumer price indexes have been rising steadily since the beginning of the year, pushed up by surging energy and commodity price increases. It appears, however, that oil prices have peaked, suggesting prices will settle back to a more moderate pace in the second half of the year.

The outlook is better for the multifamily sector, with most indicators suggesting that rental markets will be the first to benefit from pent-up housing demand. The NAHB 55+ Housing Market Index showed builder confidence improving for apartment production and demand in the 55+ housing market.

The improving economy should soon bring some relief to depressed levels of housing activity — with more solid employment prospects boosting consumer confidence. Recent data indicate that job creation is slowly gathering momentum, with job openings rising to their highest level since late-2008 and layoffs declining.

Source: NAHB's Eye on the Economy, May 31, 2011

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New Slideshow To Help With Fall Protection Compliance

With just a few weeks until new requirements for fall protection for residential construction go into effect, OSHA has created a “compliance assistance tool” to help employers prevent fall related injuries and deaths among their workers.

The PowerPoint presentation, “Residential Fall Protection Program Update,” describes safety methods and explains techniques currently used by employers during various stages of construction. These techniques involve the use of conventional fall protection systems including safety nets, guardrails, and personal fall arrest systems such as body harnesses, lanyards and lifelines. Workers who use these safety systems perform activities such as installing roof sheathing, weatherproofing a roof, and installing walls and subfloors, among others.

Falls are the leading cause of death for workers involved in construction. In December 2010, OSHA announced a new directive withdrawing a former interim directive that allowed residential builders to bypass fall protection requirements. As of June 16, 2011, companies will have to protect employees working six feet or more above lower levels with fall protection methods such as guardrail systems, safety net systems, or personal fall arrest systems. Alternative means of protection are permitted, such as the use of warning lines and safety monitoring systems during performance of roofing work on low-sloped roofs.

“Residential Fall Protection Program Update” and other guidance materials are available on [OSHA's Residential Fall Protection page](#) . Other resources include a fact sheet, and questions and answers about requirements for protecting workers from fall hazards.

U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) members voted recently to continue allowing only lumber from forest certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to receive credit under USGBC's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program. The proposal to broaden approval of other forest certification organizations received a 55% approval vote versus 42% opposed. A two-thirds majority approval vote was required for passage. *(Source: Engineered Wood Journal, Spring 2011)*