



MINNESOTA BUILDERS EXCHANGE

Weekly Bulletin

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I've been down for the count with a stomach bug these past couple of days (hence the delayed newsletter --- my apologies!). So consider this your friendly PSA: wash your hands, cover your mouth when sneezing or coughing, don't share drinks, and for the love of all things good, stay home if you're feeling crummy. Let's keep those germs at bay ☐ 🤧



By Ashlee
Membership & Communications Manager

Five Quick Things To Know / Do This Week:

- 1.) **LEARN TO READ:** Construction documents, that is! UChapter2's next [Reading Construction Documents course](#) is set for February 18 & 19. It's perfect for those new to reading project plans and specs, in a career transition, or simply in need of a refresher.
- 2.) **SUPER BOWL LIX:** Caesar's Superdome in New Orleans, the site where the New England Eagles took down the Kansas City Chiefs last weekend, is the largest fixed-dome stadium in the world, plus [nine more facility facts](#).
- 3.) **HIRING TIPS:** Here are [eight red flags to look for](#) when reviewing applications or resumes that indicate serious reasons why a candidate should be removed from consideration.
- 4.) **ADD TO CART:** Is this the last paint tray painters will ever need to buy? The Repaint Tray, a [silicone-based paint tray system](#), is endlessly reusable, capable of keeping paint fresh for weeks, and cleanable by simply peeling off paint after its dried.
- 5.) **TUNE IN:** Executive Director David Siegel recently joined Karissa Dunham on the [Shining Light on Minnesota podcast](#) to share about MBEX and the commercial construction industry.

Inside This Issue:

- **Hitting the Road:** Upcoming Member Meetups in Duluth, Moorhead, and St. Cloud
- **Indicator:** ABC's latest Backlog Indicator and Confidence Index readings
- **Sneak Peek:** A preview of the January / February *Pre-Plan Pipeline*
- **Workplace To-Dos:** 10 labor law updates to keep an eye on in February
- **MBEX Events:** See what's coming in February
- **Five Headlines:** Mishandling of electronic I-9s, custom solar panel installation robots, a new mental health app for construction workers, Komatsu's underwater dozer, and digital tools turning construction waste into gold
- **Project of the Week:** Milwaukee plans new \$490M Public Safety Building
- **Industry Event:** Bidding & estimating state projects training on February 18th
- **Member Benefit:** Multiple Employer 401(k) Savings Plan with BLD Connection

REGIONAL MEMBER MEETUPS

Join MBEX in Duluth, Moorhead, and St. Cloud

We're hosting three more regional member meetups, and MBEX members and non-members alike are invited to join us for great food, drinks, and even better company.

Invite your colleagues and help spread the word about the benefits of MBEX membership and services for the commercial construction industry.

Join us at one (or all) of the following meetups:

DULUTH

- Tuesday, February 18
- [Mr. D's Bar & Grill](#) (5622 Grand Avenue, Duluth, Minn., 55807)

FARGO / MOORHEAD

- Tuesday, February 25
- [Midtown Tavern](#) (2223 Center Avenue, Moorhead, Minn., 56560)

ST. CLOUD

- Tuesday, March 4
- [Crooked Pint Ale House](#) (58 Division Street, Waite Park, Minn., 56387)

At each Member Meetup, attendees will enjoy a short safety talk with The Builders Group (TBG), free drinks and appetizers, interactive games and prize giveaways.

All meetups are hosted from 3:00pm-6:00pm at the indicated locations above.

While each meetup is free to attend, we kindly ask for registration in advance so we have an accurate head count for food and drinks.



These regional meetups are presented in partnership with [The Builders Group \(TBG\)](#), the [Minnesota Concrete Council](#), and the [Electrical Association](#).

[Register Here](#)

BACKLOG INDICATOR & CONFIDENCE INDEX

Backlog Indicator Increases, Contractors Remain Confident

Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) reported on February 11th that its Construction Backlog Indicator increased to 8.4-months in January. When compared to January 2024, the reading is unchanged.

The monthly increase in backlog was concentrated in the Western region, which also exhibited the largest growth in backlog over the past year. The South has the longest backlog of any region despite exhibiting the largest year-over-year decrease.

	January 2025	December 2024	January 2024	1-Month Net Change
Total	8.4	8.3	8.4	0.1
Commercial & Institutional	8.6	8.2	8.6	0.4
Heavy Industrial	6.7	8.5	10.9	-1.8
Infrastructure	8.0	10.0	7.3	-2.0

Middle States	8.0	8.0	7.2	0.0
Northeast	7.5	7.5	8.7	0.0
South	9.5	9.7	11.4	-0.2
West	8.2	7.8	5.3	0.4

< \$30M	7.5	7.6	7.2	-0.1
\$30M - \$50M	9.1	8.6	9.2	0.5
\$50M - \$100M	10.2	9.2	10.9	1.0
> \$100M	11.5	11.2	13.0	0.3

ABC's Construction Confidence Index readings for sales and profit margins improved in January, while the reading for staffing levels declined.

Response	January 2025	December 2024	January 2024
Sales	64.5	64.2	59.3
Profit Margins	56.1	54.3	53.7
Staffing	62.8	63.2	63.5

The readings for all three components remain above the threshold of 50, indicating expectations for growth over the next six months.

[Read ABC's Press Release](#)

SNEAK PEEK

PRE-PLAN PIPELINE:
JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2025



Peek Inside the Latest *Pre-Plan Pipeline*

Exciting developments are underway across Minnesota.

The first 2025 issue of the MBEX *Pre-Plan Pipeline* is out, featuring 200 projects across 62 cities and counties in our home state and its surrounding regions.

This publication is available exclusively to our members with Premium Access, providing insights into projects in their early, formative stages, helping our membership stay updated on the latest proposals, project discussions, and developments.

We're giving all members a peek inside our January / February issue to see firsthand the kinds of projects included.**

You Don't Have to Miss Out!

Contact us today to upgrade your membership from Basic Access to Premium. Not only will you gain the *Pre-Plan Pipeline* monthly, but also additional tools inside the Online Plan Room.

If your company already has Premium Access services but you're not seeing this publication in your inbox, please:

- (1.) Check your spam / junk folders; and
- (2.) **Email Ashlee** to be added to the *Pre-Plan Pipeline* email list.

**Click the image to the right to open the January / February preview.



ESSENTIAL WORKPLACE TO-DOS

10 To-Dos to Add to Your February Workplace List

MBEX is here to help our members stay on top of the latest changes and have an action plan for compliance when it comes to workplace laws, especially given the rapid pace at which the White House has acted in the first weeks of President Trump's second term.

Here is a quick overview of critical developments that have happened throughout January and essential items you should consider addressing in February and beyond.

(1.) Track Changes from Workplace Watchdogs

President Trump made several unprecedented moves in January that demonstrates a clear shift in the way the federal government will approach labor law, EEO, and anti-bias laws over the course of the next several years.

Additionally, Trump issued [an executive order](#) announcing the federal government will recognize only two sexes while rolling back Biden-era EEO workplace guidance on LGBTQ+ harassment.

(2.) Assess Your Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Programs

The President issued a far-reaching executive order on January 21st targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiative in not only the federal government, but also the private sector.

While the order created many unanswered questions and will likely face legal challenges, [this explains what private employers](#) need to know about these new federal anti-DEI initiatives and what you should do now.

(3.) Coordinate with Counsel on Affirmative Action Orders

Just days after the President [issued an executive order dismantling the race and gender affirmative action obligations](#) that have applied to federal contractors since the 1960s, the Labor Department announced on January 24th that it was ceasing all pending investigations and enforcement activity.

This means employers subject to pending cases, conciliation agreements, investigations, and complaints related to the now-rescinded Executive Order 11246 have now received a reprieve, but federal contractors and subcontractors will still need to continue other compliance efforts.

(4.) Create an Action Plan in Response to Sharp Immigration Policy Changes

In the hours after he was sworn in, the President's administration started taking immediate action to reshape the country's immigration policies --- and [employers need to pay attention](#) given the impact these changes will soon have on the workplace.

(5.) Keep Up with the Evolving A.I. Landscape

The White House enacted a sweeping shift in A.I. policy in January rescinding President Biden's executive order on artificial intelligence and announcing a massive private sector-left A.I. infrastructure investment. Then, President Trump followed up with [an executive order](#) on January 23rd calling for a group of regulators to craft a new A.I. policy within six months intended to ensure "global A.I. dominance."

(6.) Monitor Labor Law Development

Just days into the newest Congressional session, a key Republican Senator shocked many employers by pushing for a law that would significantly tilt the playing field to the benefit of unions and labor advocates. Is this the beginning of a true labor revolution that

will upend the traditional status quo, a plan destined to go nowhere, or something in between?

Here are [the seven key sections of the proposal](#) and thoughts on what to expect in the coming months.

(7.) Get Ready for Increased OSHA Penalties

Employers are facing higher penalties for workplace safety violations in 2025 now that the U.S. Department of Labor has published its listing of annual increases. Here are [the key changes you need to know](#) and the steps you can take to ensure you provide a safe workplace for your employees.

(8.) Consult Your State Law Compliance Checklist

With all the news from the federal government, it's important to remember that you still have workplace obligations at the state and local levels, too. Be sure to check for compliance with any new labor laws that impact your operations.

(9.) Track the Latest Pay Transparency Trends

Speaking of state laws, blue states are expected to up their game this year in resistance to the Republican trifecta in the White House, Senate, and House --- and pay transparency will continue to be one of the hottest topics.

Here are [five tips for compliance](#) and what you need to know about pay transparency laws.

(10.) Review SCOTUS Ruling on the Standard of Proof in Overtime Exemption Cases

The Supreme Court handed businesses a win on January 15th when it weighed in on how much evidence an employer needs to show a court to prove it correctly classified employees as exempt from minimum wage and overtime pay under the FLSA.

Here are the [key points you should know about the ruling](#) and what it means for your workplace.

The information provided in this article is intended for general informational purposes only. It should not be considered as legal advice. We strongly recommend consulting with your business's attorney or legal advisor before taking any actions based on its content.

[Dive Deeper with J.D. Supra](#)



A valuable benefit of an MBEX membership is invitations to our social and educational events; by being an employee of a member company, you too can take advantage and attend any and all MBEX-sponsored events.

** indicates a newly added event

**** February 18 - Reading Construction Documents [Part 1]**

From navigating title block information to combing through specification documents, participants will learn how to navigate a project and understand the material, construction requirements, and basics of reading construction documentation. [Sign Up Here](#)

February 18 - MBEX Regional Member Meetup: Duluth

Join us together with The Builders Group (TBG), the Minnesota Concrete Council, and the Electrical Association for a casual gathering with food, drinks, and networking. [Register Here](#)

**** February 19 - Reading Construction Documents [Part 2]**

Part 2 of this online program taught by UChapter2. [Sign Up Here](#)

February 20 - Online Plan Room Demo

From navigating the Deskpads, setting up filters, understanding project information, and adding your company to a project's bidders lists, this free one-hour session is a great introduction to our Online Plan Room. [Register Now](#)

February 25 - MBEX Regional Member Meetup: Fargo / Moorhead

Join us together with The Builders Group (TBG), the Minnesota Concrete Council, and the Electrical Association for a casual gathering with food, drinks, and networking. [Register Here](#)

March 4 - MBEX Regional Member Meetup: St. Cloud

Join us together with The Builders Group (TBG), the Minnesota Concrete Council, and the Electrical Association for a casual gathering with food, drinks, and networking. [Register Here](#)

**** March 20 - Online Plan Room Demo**

From navigating the Deskpads, setting up filters, understanding project information, and adding your company to a project's bidders lists, this free one-hour session is a great introduction to our Online Plan Room. *Not yet open for registration*

April 16 - MBEX Spring Social

An annual social event providing members the opportunity to mingle, network and deepen their connections with fellow industry professionals. *Registration will open in early March.*

May 7 - Young Professionals Network (YPN)

From college students, graduates and interns, to those just getting started within the construction industry, the MBEX Young Professionals Network will create a forum for emerging young professionals, providing resources to connect and begin networking. [Email Melanie](#) to be added to the YPN mailing list. *Registration will open in March.*

[View 2025 MBEX Events Calendar](#)



CONSTRUCTION HEADLINES

Five construction-related headlines you need to read over the next coffee break.

LABAOR & WORKFORCE

[Mishandled Electronic I-9s Could Be a Costly Immigration Threat for Employers](#)

The [Trump] administration has begun workplace raids and stakeholders predict an increase in audits of Form I-9s, the documents used to verify whether an employee is eligible to work in the U.S. In the days following Trump's inauguration, however, voices in the immigration compliance community have been increasingly sounding an alarm about a vulnerability of which many employers may be unaware: their Form I-9 vendors.

ROBOTICS

* [Rosendin Electric Deploys Custom Robots to Install Solar Panels](#)

Newly developed solar panel installation robots are drastically reducing labor costs and human toil associated with building solar photovoltaic farms, as Rosendin Electric has found after a year of successful trials on real solar jobsites. Installing panels on large solar farms is tough work, requiring multi-person crews to lug 80- to 100-lbs panels into place on preassembled mounting racks --- with some holding a panel steady while another worker screws it into place. (*Engineering News-Record*)

MENTAL HEALTH

□ [Partnership to Launch Groundbreaking Mental Health App for Construction](#)

The first-of-its-kind mobile app provides workers immediate, confidential access to mental health services, removing barriers and eliminating the stigma often associated with seeking help. Participating construction companies will display QR codes at job sites, allowing workers to discreetly scan and connect with licensed providers for support. (*Contractor Magazine*)

HEAVY EQUIPMENT

□ [A Closer Look: Komatsu's Electric Underwater Dozer](#)

A concept machine was showcased at the recent CES show in Las Vegas, but the idea for this amphibious bulldozer is not new. While the operator remains safely on shore, data mapping and visualization technology allows the electric underwater robot to operate at depths of up to 160-feet and to see the seabed or lakebed being cleared. (*Equipment World*)

CONTECH

□ [Digital Tools Turn Construction Waste into Building Gold](#)

Trash is becoming a new treasure in building construction with advances in digitalization. Escalating prices for new building products and supply chain hurdles, coupled with the vast quantity of waste generated, have motivated the construction industry to improve its resource efficiency using digital tools. Construction and demolition waste (CDW) comprise nearly a third of all solid waste product globally. Fortunately, a large percentage of CDW is recyclable. (*Architect Magazine*)



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PROJECT OF THE WEEK



Milwaukee Plans \$490M Public Safety Building

[Read more on Finance & Commerce](#) | [Read more on The Daily Reporter](#)

The Public Safety Building, at 821 West State Street in Milwaukee, holds a handful of criminal courts and holding and jury facilities for the county court system. The building is nearly 100 years old and doesn't reach state standards for courthouses, creating slowdowns in the local justice system and safety risks for those who use the facility, according to many local officials and judges.

Deferred maintenance and upkeep costs alone are more than \$300-million and don't address structural issues, data from Milwaukee County showed. A total of 10-floors containing around 60,000-square-feet of jail space have been unused since 2000, official said.

The early plan assumption is to move facilities out of the safety building, then deconstruct and reconstruct the facility. Overall, the county wants to put all the criminal courts under one roof.

The design process will take two years and the early plans aren't final.

Because the safety building is connected to the historic courthouse and the Criminal Justice Facility, the project will bring renovations to those areas as well.

In January, the county announced it selected engineering firm AECOM to provide architectural planning and design services on a multi-year project. The county also brought in a team from the National Center for State Courts' Court Consulting Services Division to seek stakeholder input.

AECOM will work on design through 2027, and construction could begin in 2028 or 2029 and continue through 2032, officials noted.

ABOVE PHOTO: Milwaukee's Public Safety Building via Wisconsin Public Radio



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Questions? Contact Tanner Benson
608-793-4826 or TBenson@kwiktrip.com

UPCOMING INDUSTRY EVENTS



INDUSTRY EVENTS

Bidding & Estimating on State Projects Presented by MnDOT's DBE Construction Academy

DATE: Tuesday, February 18

TIME: 11:00am-12:30pm

LOCATION: Virtual Event - link provided upon registration

[Register Here](#)

COST: Free

This course will teach attendees how to identify areas of need on State projects, gain better understanding of State contracts and how to respond to a State Request for Proposal (RFP).

Attendees will also learn how to develop responsive and responsible bids, recognize the essential components of a bid and learn how to estimate more accurately while considering the potential pitfalls to avoid.

MEMBER BENEFITS



MEMBER BENEFITS

Benefit of the Week: 401(k) MEP Plan with BLD Connection

This Multiple Employer 401(k) Savings Plan (MEP) brings together member plans into one group 401(k) managed by BLD Connection.

This means you can hand over many of those responsibilities --- freeing you up to spend your time where it counts: focused on your business.

BLD CONNECTION

Already offer a 401(k)? Considering a plan for your employees? Find out if BLD Connection's 401(k) MEP is right for your company.

Contact Dan Gardner to get started and to learn more: [\(612\) 743-4961](tel:6127434961) or dgardner@osaicwealth.com.

You can also view a BLD Connection 401(k) informational video [here](#).

PROJECT INFORMATION + UPDATES

- Total Projects Received at MBEX from 2/3/2025 - 2/7/2025: **124**
- Total Project Leads Reported on at MBEX from 2/3/2025 - 2/7/2025: **36**
- Total Active Projects Received / Reported on at MBEX as of 2/11/2025: **487**
- Total New Projects in the Online Plan Room as of 2/11/2025: **723**

[DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

Click the button above to view the most recent project data from 2/5/2025 - 2/11/2025.

For information about the *Bulletin's* content, technical issues, or to place an ad (such as a Minority Notice, Job Posting, or Event Notice), contact [Ashlee](#), Membership + Communications Manager.



The MBEX *Weekly Bulletin* brought to you in part by [The Builders Group \(TBG\)](#).

UPCOMING MBEX EVENTS

- **February 18 & 19** - Reading Construction Documents course with UChapter2
- **February 18** - Regional Member Meetup: Duluth
- **February 20** - Online Plan Room Demo
- **February 25** - Regional Member Meetup: Fargo / Moorhead
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- **March 20** - Online Plan Room Demo
- **April 16** - MBEX Spring Social
- **May 7** - Young Professionals Network (YPN) Networking Event

Connect with the Builders Exchange:



Revisit Past Bulletins:

[Feb. 5 - No. 5](#) | [Jan. 29 - No. 4](#) | [Jan. 22 - No. 3](#) | [Jan. 15 - No. 2](#) | [Jan. 8 - No. 1](#)

Information within the MBEX *Weekly Bulletin* are obtained from sources deemed reliable. The Minnesota Builders Exchange (MBEX) does not assume responsibility for its completeness or accuracy. You are urged to check your own sources in addition to the information contained in this publication. This issue contains plans and other bidding information received prior to and including the date noted above. The project data within this newsletter is intended for member company's and their employees use only.

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