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# THE LICA

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# CONTRACTOR

Volume 18, Number 5

Winter 2025



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**Profit Moves for 2026**

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**Top Gun Construction Rodeo  
Delivers in a Big Way**

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**Farewell to the Godfather of LICA**



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# A Message From the President



Hello to all:

There is nothing quite like a beautiful fall morning- the crisp air, the colors of the trees, and that quiet reminder that another season is turning. It's a time to pause, take a breath, and appreciate the work we do and the people we share it with. That same spirit of renewal fits perfectly with what's happening across LICA right now: a time of change, growth, and excitement for what lies ahead.

Across the country, our members are tackling new projects, strengthening partnerships, and bringing fresh energy to the work we do. LICA is building momentum and growing stronger for the future. I'm proud of the direction we're heading and grateful for every member and associate who helps make this organization what it is today.

As we look ahead, I'm pleased to share that Dennis Mikula will join us as National LICA's new CEO on January 1. Dennis brings experience, leadership, and a fresh perspective that will serve LICA well in the years to come. We also extend heartfelt thanks to Jerry Biuso for his many years of service and the legacy he leaves behind. Jerry's commitment to growing membership and strengthening partnerships helped make LICA what it is today.

I would like to take this time to welcome Origin Specialty to LICA as a Corporate Sponsor. I am looking forward to what all they can bring to the table for the betterment of our companies and our organization.

I also hope each of you has a chance to attend your state convention, and I encourage you to mark February 28, 2025, on your calendar for the start of our winter convention in Las Vegas. We'll wrap up on March 2 and head straight into Con-Expo, the largest construction machinery show many of us will ever see. Make your plans early, as Allison and the convention committee have secured a fantastic room rate through the show. Hope to see you there!

As we move into the holiday season, I want to take a moment to wish you and your families a very Happy Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas. May your days be filled with good health, great company, and the satisfaction of a job well done. Here's to a strong finish to the year!

Jeff Schell, National LICA President



The LICA "Green Wave" takes over CONEXPO-CON/AGG 2023.

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# Profit Moves for 2026: Upgrades That Pay You Back

By CAROLINE KRUG, Editor The LICA Contractor

The end of the year is when most contractors take stock of what worked, what didn't, and what needs to change. For land improvement contractors, the path to a more profitable 2026 isn't just about buying new iron or adding another crew. It's about getting more out of the equipment and people you already have, smarter use of machines, tighter control of time and costs, and a return to the fundamentals that keep every job productive.

Margins are still tight, material and labor costs continue to shift, and clients want fast, accurate work. The contractors who will thrive in 2026 will be those who operate lean and adapt quickly. The upgrades that follow are practical, realistic, and built to deliver measurable gains across a full season of work.

## 1. Multipurpose Power: Do More with Less

One of the fastest ways to boost profit is to cut down on the number of machines it takes to finish a job. Multipurpose equipment lets contractors cover more ground with fewer operators and less overhead.

CASE Construction Equipment has made versatility a top priority in its lineup, with machines like the 580SV Construction King combining loader, backhoe, and tool-carrier capabilities in one package. The result is less transport time, lower fuel use, and greater flexibility for small to mid-sized crews that tackle a variety of work each week.

"Now is the time for contractors to assess their equipment strategy and consider investing in multi-functional machines designed for versatility and efficiency," says Terry Dolan, Head of CNH Construction Brands, North America. "Combining multiple capabilities in a single unit helps companies better



manage workforce challenges and adapt to the varied demands of today's jobsites."

For land improvement contractors, this kind of flexibility translates directly into profit. Whether trenching, backfilling, or loading material, one machine that handles multiple roles keeps projects moving and labor costs predictable.

## 2. Precision That Pays: Smarter Grading

Few tools have changed land improvement work as much as GPS guidance, but the real shift is how universal and accessible the technology has become. According to Nate Cook, Managing Partner of Cook's AGPS, even older machines are now easy to upgrade.

"GPS control can be added to self-propelled tile plows, dozers, or tractors pulling blades and plows, and most modern agricultural tractors built since 2000 already have electronic



*A GPS-equipped Cat dozer cuts grade-checking time and improves accuracy.*



*Meet the CASE 580SV Construction King side shift backhoe loader.*

valve controls that make them nearly plug-and-play," Cook explains. "Even machines that started life running on lasers can now be controlled with GPS."

Training, once a hurdle, is now faster and simpler. "When I first started training operators 22 years ago, many of them would admit they didn't even know how to turn on a computer," Cook recalls. "Today, smartphones have made everyone more comfortable with technology. Operators can send a picture of their screen or even connect their computer to the internet so we can remote in and fix a problem in minutes."

The payoff is immediate. Contractors see savings through reduced grade-checking, faster planning, and consistent accuracy that limits rework.

The most significant improvement in recent years is the shift to full global navigation satellite systems (GNSS), which pull satellite signals from multiple global constellations rather than relying on GPS alone. According to Cook, the gains have been dramatic. "Even for contractors who have run GPS for more than ten years, the last four years have brought major improvements," he says. "As other countries launched satellites and manufacturers updated hardware and firmware, we went from tracking 13 to 18 satellites to 26 to 40. That greatly improved accuracy and reduced wait time near trees and other obstructions." The result is smoother production, fewer interruptions, and more consistent grades across the job.

For 2026, GPS guidance is less a luxury and more a practical necessity. Crews that run it work faster, burn less fuel, and spend less time on cleanup passes. This level of efficiency keeps bids sharp and profits intact.



*BigIron Auctions let contractors liquidate unused equipment without hauling costs or middlemen.*

### 3. Track the Dollars: Managing Time, Labor, and Equipment

Most contractors know what they bill. Fewer know exactly where they make or lose money. Clear visibility into labor, machine hours, and downtime is one of the most direct ways to improve profit without adding overhead.

Tools like busybusy and Sandhills' Telematics+ give contractors an accurate picture of their operations in real time.

busybusy, a time-tracking and equipment monitoring app built for contractors, helps bridge the gap between field work and financial control. Crews clock in from their phones, supervisors verify hours instantly, and every minute of labor and machine time is assigned to a job.

"You can't manage what you can't measure," says Bracken Anderson, Senior Partner Manager at busybusy. "When contractors track both time and equipment use, they uncover the hidden waste that eats into profit. Our busybusy clients see an average 30 percent increase in profit within a year because better visibility turns lost hours and idle machines into real gains."

At the same time, Sandhills Global's Telematics+ provides a big-picture view of the fleet. Contractors can see hours, idle time, and maintenance schedules across mixed brands, helping them prevent breakdowns and plan replacements. Pairing that data with the Value Insight Portal (VIP) gives contractors the resale value of every machine in their fleet, so decisions to sell, upgrade, or repair are based on facts, not estimates.

Together, these tools give contractors the clarity they need to protect their profit.

### 4. Selling Smarter: Turn Old Equipment into Opportunity

Profitability isn't just about what you buy. It's also about how and when you sell. Online auctions have become one of the most efficient ways for contractors to convert idle or aging iron into capital for upgrades.



*Real numbers. Real control. busybusy gives contractors instant visibility into labor and equipment hours—right from the jobsite.*

BigIron Auctions gives contractors the flexibility to sell from their own location while reaching a national buyer base. The process is simple, transparent, and often delivers results faster than working through dealers or waiting on private buyers.

"As we head into the 'short' off-season for many construction and farm operations, now is one of the best times to list equipment," says Tim Kipper, General Manager of BigIron Auctions. "Buyers are looking, budgets are open, and auctions can deliver results faster than waiting for a traditional trade-in or private sale."

Selling what no longer serves your operation today can open the door for the upgrades and opportunities you want tomorrow.

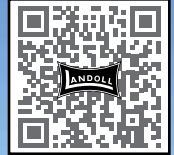
### 5. Reducing Risk and Protecting Your People

Profit is also preserved by what doesn't go wrong. Injuries, violations, and downtime from preventable accidents eat into margins faster than almost anything else.

Through Prins Insurance, LICA members have free access to the LICA Safety Portal, powered by Zywave. The portal lets contractors create OSHA-compliant safety manuals tailored to



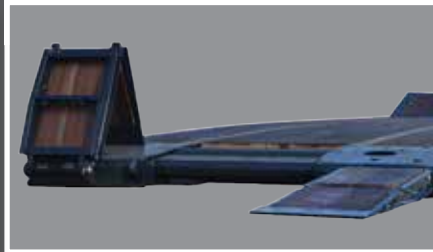
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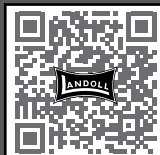
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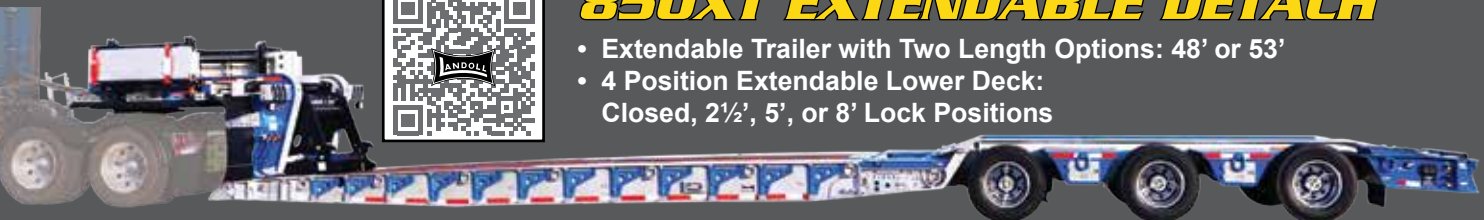
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excavation, trenching, site-prep, and other earthwork. It also provides training materials, checklists, and other resources that help keep crews compliant and clients confident.

“A safer crew is a more profitable crew,” says Bruce Mosier, CIC, President of Prins Insurance. “Members who use the Safety Portal are not just meeting requirements. They are reducing downtime and protecting their reputation.”

The same idea applies to personal protective equipment. Proper footwear reduces slips, fatigue, and minor injuries

that can cause lost time. Red Wing Shoes offers LICA members a fifteen percent discount on safety footwear, which makes upgrading your crew’s comfort and protection more affordable. It is also a smart time of year to outfit your team. New boots make a practical holiday gift for employees and a good way to start next year with everyone safer and better equipped.

### 6. The Profitability Mindset

The most profitable contractors in 2026 will be those who combine old-school practicality with modern precision. Every machine hour, every minute of labor, and every gallon of fuel is a potential gain or loss. Contractors who track and refine those details will be the ones who stay ahead.

Improvement doesn’t have to mean a major overhaul. It can mean upgrading one tile plow with GPS, replacing a backhoe with a multipurpose loader, adding a time-tracking app, or re-writing a safety plan. What matters most is clarity: knowing where your money goes, how your people perform, and when your machines make or lose you money.

As you plan your 2026 budget, remember that profit is rarely found in a single purchase. It’s built in layers: accurate work, reliable machines, transparent data, safe people, and smart timing. Every improvement, no matter how small, strengthens the foundation for a better year ahead. ■

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# A Farewell to “The Godfather of LICA”— Jerry Biuso’s Legacy of Growth, Grit, and GREEN Shirts

By CAROLINE KRUG, Editor *The LICA Contractor*

For more than two decades, Jerry Biuso, Sr. was the face of the Land Improvement Contractors of America. To many, he’ll always be the “Godfather of LICA,” a nickname born from his unmistakable personality, his Jersey confidence, and the way he looked after this association as if it were his own family. As he retires at the end of the year, the LICA community is taking time to reflect on the incredible impact he has had on the organization, its members, and the people who had the privilege of working beside him.

## Growing a National Family

When Jerry first got involved with LICA, membership hovered around 1,400 contractors. Through relentless effort, creative ideas, and countless flights—between 40 and 60 a year by his count—he helped double that number to 2,800. He believed in the value of connection and never hesitated to get on a plane, shake a hand, or listen to what members needed.

Those conversations weren’t transactional. They were personal. He remembered people’s families, their businesses, and the challenges they faced. Jerry had a way of making everyone feel like they mattered. He wasn’t just recruiting members; he was building a family.

## A Brand Builder in a World of Bulldozers

Jerry didn’t come from the construction world. His background was in New York advertising, where he represented brands like Elizabeth Arden and Saks Fifth Avenue. He knew how to build an identity and how to make people take notice. LICA benefited from every bit of that experience.

One of Jerry’s proudest accomplishments was creating *The LICA Contractor* magazine. What began as a way to communicate news and updates quickly became the heart of LICA’s national identity, uniting contractors, sharing ideas, and celebrating members’ achievements.

He also championed the visibility of the LICA name. He believed LICA members should be instantly recognizable, and he turned the green shirt into a symbol people looked for at every event. No one wore that shirt with more pride than Jerry.

## Creating Community, One Idea at a Time

Jerry had a knack for turning simple ideas into beloved traditions. One of his favorites was Associates’ Night, which he reinvented as a themed networking event that reflected the personality of the host city. These gatherings became a highlight of every national meeting, blending business, laughter, and local flavor.



He also expanded LICA’s visibility at trade shows and national events. From CONEXPO to Hard Hat, NACD to IECA, Jerry made sure LICA was represented. He later served on the CONEXPO educational committee, helping shape educational programming for excavating professionals and raising LICA’s national profile.

## State Chapters and Strong Partnerships

Throughout his career, Jerry visited every state chapter, recruiting, supporting, and celebrating the people who make LICA strong. Many of the members he recruited went on to serve in leadership positions at both state and national levels.

He built relationships with associate members and major manufacturers that helped sustain LICA’s growth over the years, agencies, legislators, and industry partners so contractors had someone in their corner. And he showed up for members whenever they needed him, whether the issue was big or small, business or personal.

## An Advocate Contractors Could Count On

Jerry stood apart because he treated advocacy as a responsibility, not a task. He knew the pressures facing small contractors and kept a close watch on every regulatory or tax change that could affect their bottom line. He paid attention, he asked questions, and he was an early voice urging members to make full use of Section 179 deductions and bonus depreciation.

Whenever he spoke to a crowd, he reminded contractors that he saw himself as their advocate first. “My job is to help my members run safer, smarter, and to be more profitable,” he once said, “and I take that very seriously.” He meant it.

## In His Own Words

Jerry shared a few reflections from his early days with LICA: “I had a hostile beginning,” he laughed. “At my first Iowa meeting, a contractor threatened to chop off my legs. In Virginia, someone told me if I didn’t take off my tie, he’d cut it off. And in the Carolinas, a member told me he’d be watching my every move because he didn’t think I’d ever succeed.”



“But I kept showing up. I went from being the new guy from New Jersey to being part of something bigger than I ever imagined.”

He recalls how his national journey began almost by accident.

“I started as the NJ LICA Executive Director, and when I went to my first national convention, I sat in on the public relations committee meeting. I was the only one there. Without a vote, they made me chair of the committee. That’s how my national career began.”

Over the years, Jerry worked alongside dozens of dedicated presidents, executive committee members, and contractors he now considers lifelong friends.

### Stories From the Road

Jerry’s colleagues didn’t just work with him. They traveled with him, argued with him, laughed with him, and made lifelong memories with him.

Mike Cook of Michigan LICA remembers taking Jerry out recruiting in the snow during his early years. Jerry hadn’t brought boots, so Mike handed him a pair and led him across muddy fields to sign up a new contractor.

“Then we went to Les Miller’s nice office,” Mike said, “and the frustration of taking those boots off... I laughed so hard. City guy in a farmer world.”

Mike also remembers how Jerry always asked about his family, especially Mike’s grandson with autism, who Jerry always made feel welcome at conventions. “He’s a brother and a mentor,” Mike said. “I’ll always cherish the time spent with him.”

Maura Dibble from New York LICA told the now-famous chocolate cake story. At one of Jerry’s first conventions, she leaned over and sampled his dessert with her fork. He never forgot it. From then on, she sent him a chocolate cake every year for his birthday. Their friendship spanned countless trade shows, road trips, football games, and plenty of laughter.

### A Lasting Legacy

Jerry’s focus on membership, branding, and building genuine relationships left a lasting impression on every part of LICA, from coast to coast and from the boardroom to the job site. Those who worked with him describe a leader who cared deeply about people and believed in what LICA stood for.

As Jerry steps into this next chapter, the LICA community thanks him for his years of dedication. LICA will never have another Jerry Biuso. And we will never forget the years he gave so much of himself to the organization he loved. He led with heart, humor, loyalty, and fire, and his work will continue to inspire the members and friends he’s brought together along the way. ■

## LICA Members Remember...

*“Jerry’s energy is contagious – you always knew when he was in the room. He’s fought hard for LICA and for our members, always focused on growth and keeping this organization strong. After working together for so long, it’s hard to imagine LICA without him leading the charge.”*

—Eileen Levy, CFO, National LICA

*“I had the pleasure of meeting Jerry in New Jersey when he assumed the role of Executive Director. It did not take long for us to become friends, as we quickly found a lot of common interests. Our friendship has been marked by countless road trips, numerous trade shows, football, especially the Buffalo Bills, golf events and many libations and a lot of laughter. Together, we have created hundreds of memories, each one cherished and unforgettable.”*

—Maura Dibble, Executive Director, NY LICA:

*“For nearly twenty years, I’ve had the honor of working alongside Jerry—a true leader whose wisdom, integrity, and tenacity have shaped LICA’s voice and strengthened our community. His vision and tireless commitment gave life to both the LICA Contractor magazine and The History of Farm Drainage and the LICA Contractor book, preserving our industry’s story for generations to come. Jerry’s legacy of leadership and friendship will continue to guide us all. I wish him comfort, gratitude, and the very best in the next chapter of his life.”*

—Bob Clark, Past President, National LICA:

*“Jerry’s ideas have shaped LICA for decades. He’s never been afraid to try something new or push us forward – from the*

*magazine to CONEXPO and everything in between. He’s got a big personality and an even bigger heart for this organization and its members. It’s been an incredible run working side by side all these years.”*

—Allison Hack, EVP, National LICA:

*“I am proud to have worked with Jerry, Bob Clark, Eileen Levy, Deb Dickens, Caroline Krug, and many others on the History of Farm Drainage book. I was honored that Jerry believed my role in the evolution of GPS was worth an entire chapter. It brought back many fond memories from throughout my life.*

*Jerry, thank you. You were never just a director to me in all the years we worked together at LICA. You have been a brother and a mentor who taught me how to handle both the good and the tough moments. I am grateful for the positions and responsibilities you trusted me with over the years.*

*Best wishes to you, Donna, and your family. Jake and all of my family will always cherish the time we spent with you. We’re always here for you. Go Michigan!”*

—Mike Cook, Past President, National LICA:

*“Jerry changed the entire course of my career. With his support, I grew into the editor of a national magazine. I even became a published author because of a project he put into motion. He taught me so much about publishing, design, and the art of negotiation. I’ll always be grateful for the chance to learn from the Godfather of LICA.”*

—Caroline Krug, Editor The LICA Contractor:

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# 1st Annual Top Gun Construction Rodeo Raises Over \$25,000 to Support 11-Year-Old Pierce Cole: A Community Steps Up



Colby Nutter (Carter Cat), Eric Gordon (TMG Construction), Edgar Ramirez (TMG Construction), Denny Housden (TMG Construction), Joe Jenkins (Dozer LLC), Tory Jasinski (TJT Construction), Tommy Chapman (Mountaineer Pipe Construction), Fausto Cortes (Veterans LLC), Kyle Lushina (Loudoun Co. Construction), and David Gallahan (Dozer LLC) came together in support of Pierce Cole at the Top Gun Construction Rodeo.

By ALLISON HACK, Executive Vice President, National LICA

What began as a six-week idea grew into a remarkable outpouring of generosity as hundreds gathered on Saturday, November 15, 2025, at the Lovettsville Game Protective Association for the first-ever Top Gun Construction Rodeo, an event benefiting 11-year-old Pierce Cole, who is fighting T-Cell Acute Lymphoblast Leukemia. More than \$25,000 was raised, with additional donations still coming in and every dollar will be given directly to the Cole family.

## Competition With Heart

From 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., skilled heavy-equipment operators competed head-to-head in timed challenges that showcased the talent, precision, and camaraderie within our industry. Local contractors provided 14 pieces of equipment, creating a powerful visual reminder of how deeply the construction community cares for its own. A new CAT machine, made available thanks to a LICA member, became a huge hit for kids, who eagerly waited in line to try the \$5 tire-stacking challenge with all proceeds going directly to Pierce's family, one of the day's most memorable attractions.

## Crowds, Cheers, and Standout Attractions

Attendance exceeded all expectations, with roughly 300 cars filling the lot and families cheering operators through every challenge. Support also came from leading dealers such as Carter CAT, James River Equipment, JCB, Virginia Maryland Tractor, and Linder Komatsu, who stepped up to ensure the competition grounds were fully equipped and ready for action.

A 6-by-6-foot drone, brought in by supporter Sean Keane, drew crowds as it soared above the event grounds, demonstrating advanced technology for spreading grass seed and fertilizer. It wasn't just entertaining; it turned into a teaching moment for both the young and the young at heart.

## Acts of Generosity

The silent auction delivered both excitement and heartfelt generosity. A CAT cooler sold for \$1,000 and then the winner immediately donated it back to the family. Meanwhile, a bowling ball stopped two children in their tracks. They wanted it, badly, but only had one penny to offer. They placed their bid, and when no one challenged them, they proudly walked away with their prize to cheers from the crowd.

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## The Moment That Said It All

Event organizer Dave Gallahan said one memory will forever define the day.

“Pierce’s dad, Fred, just walked up and hugged me,” Dave recalled. “He couldn’t say thank you enough. There were hugs and tears from people I didn’t even know.”

Fred, Dave said, is not someone who ever asks for help. But on this day, the community made sure he didn’t need to.

“It’s about coming together—laying everything aside. Cancer can hit anyone anywhere. We try to help in any way,” Dave shared.

“All these guys helping are construction guys. We do care about families and community.”

Dave credits an incredible team effort for pulling off such a meaningful first-year event with almost no lead time: Eric and Jenny Gordon (new VA LICA Vice President and Secretary), Glen Brown of Carter CAT, and VA LICA Executive Director Millie Gallahan.

## A New Tradition Begins

The event banner originally read “Construction Rodeo.” But Dave made one important change right before printing: adding “1st Annual”. When people noticed, they cheered because they knew they were part of something special.

Even through the challenges of planning a major fundraiser so quickly, Dave never wavered.

“I didn’t realize how hard it was to put together an event like this,” he admitted. “But it wasn’t about me. Only Cole mattered.”



Joe Jenkins of Dozer LLC (right) took first place, while Denny Housden of TMG Construction earned second in the dozer competition.

With overwhelming support, strong industry backing, and a purpose that touched every heart on the property, the Top Gun Construction Rodeo is poised to become a proud annual tradition, uniting contractors, operators, and families in a shared mission to lift each other up.

Because when one member of the construction community hurts, we show up. ■

# Calling All Contractors: Share Your Expertise in The LICA Contractor!

Have you ever wanted to share your insights, experiences, or innovative projects with the broader LICA community? Now is your chance! The LICA Contractor magazine is calling for submissions from our valued readers like you. Whether you’re a seasoned professional, a passionate newcomer, or an industry enthusiast, we invite you to contribute your article ideas and photos for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue.

### Why Submit to The LICA Contractor Magazine?

1. Showcase Your Expertise: Share your insights, experiences, and best practices with fellow land improvement professionals across the nation.
2. Gain Recognition: Get your name and your work in front of a dedicated readership of industry insiders, contractors, and enthusiasts.
3. Contribute to the Community: Help cultivate a vibrant exchange of ideas and knowledge within the LICA community.
4. Inspire Others: Your stories and photos have the power to inspire and educate others in the industry, sparking new ideas and approaches.

### What We’re Looking For:

- Feature Articles: Share your expertise on topics such as best practices, industry trends, project highlights, and innovation in land improvement.
- Case Studies: Dive deep into specific projects, challenges faced, solutions implemented, and lessons learned.

- Photo Submissions: Capture the beauty and complexity of land improvement projects through striking photographs.
- Success Stories: Inspire others with stories of triumph, innovation, and collaboration in the field.
- Tips and Tricks: Offer practical advice, tips, and tricks to help fellow contractors excel in their work.

### How to Submit:

- Article Ideas: Send in a brief outline or description of your proposed article.
- Photos: Share high-resolution images capturing the essence of LICA
- Contact Details: Include your name, contact information, and a brief bio.

### Email Your Submissions to:


Caroline Krug, Editor, [cnational.lica@gmail.com](mailto:cnational.lica@gmail.com)

### Subject Line:

The LICA Contractor – Article Submission or  
The LICA Contractor – Photo Submission

*Selected submissions will be featured in upcoming issues, so don’t miss out on this fantastic opportunity to be part of The LICA Contractor magazine!*




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# Autonomous Equipment Takes a Big Step Forward

Autonomous construction is shifting from a future concept to a present-day competitive advantage. Bedrock Robotics, a San Francisco-based technology firm founded in 2024 by former Waymo engineers, has begun supervised autonomy testing on active construction sites, marking one of the most ambitious deployments of autonomous excavation equipment to date.

Working with Sundt Construction, Bedrock's systems have been loading human-operated articulating dump trucks on a 130-acre manufacturing facility project in the Southern U.S. To date, the company reports more than 65,000 cubic yards of material moved using the same workflows crews already follow. Rather than forcing contractors to adopt new methods,

Bedrock integrates directly with existing processes and equipment, from compact 20-ton excavators to 80-ton earthmovers.

For Sundt, autonomy isn't about replacing operators. It's about better leveraging the experienced ones they have. "The biggest challenge we face isn't just finding operators—it's keeping experienced ones engaged," said Dan Green, Project Manager at Sundt Construction. He notes that repetitive truck loading can be a morale-killer. Automating that work allows skilled operators to focus on tasks where judgment, creativity, and problem-solving matter.

Bedrock also recently completed autonomous excavation at Proto-Town, a Central Texas facility that supports next-generation hardware startups. It is Bedrock's second active deployment, part of a broader push to commercialize fully autonomous operations in 2026.

The company is expanding rapidly through partnerships with major heavy civil and commercial contractors. Austin Bridge & Road, Maverick Constructors, and Haydon Companies are among the newest collaborators, joining a growing list that includes Zachry Construction, Champion Site Prep, and Capitol Aggregates. These partners help Bedrock refine its technology in conditions that reflect real-world job site complexity.

Safety and workforce shortages are key drivers behind the momentum. "Our partnership with Bedrock Robotics has opened the door to autonomous equipment, a game-changer in next-level worker protection as well as increased efficiency and precision," said Bill Heathcott, Executive Vice President of Austin Bridge & Road. By reducing exposure to repetitive and hazardous tasks, autonomy can help retain valuable operators while making projects more productive.

Bedrock CEO Boris Sofman believes the timing couldn't be better. With demand surging from data centers, manufacturing, and energy projects, contractors face unprecedented workload pressure. "Developing our technology on active job sites with experienced contractors means we're addressing the exact challenges that limit project capacity today," he said.

If Bedrock succeeds in its 2026 commercialization target, autonomous excavation could shift from an industry experiment to a practical tool that helps contractors do more with the labor they have. Contractors should keep a close eye on how quickly this technology scales—because autonomy isn't coming someday. It's already here. ■

Learn more at [bedrockrobotics.com](https://bedrockrobotics.com).

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# The Importance of Following Change Order Provisions in Construction Contracts

By CRAIG MARTIN, Construction Attorney with Lamson Dugan and Murray

Change is inevitable on construction projects. Unforeseen site conditions, owner-requested modifications, design clarifications, and regulatory issues frequently require adjustments to the original scope of work. While these changes are common, how they are handled can dramatically affect project outcomes. This is why strict adherence to the contract's change-order provisions is essential.

Change-order clauses establish the required procedure for requesting, approving, and documenting modifications to the work. They typically include notice deadlines, pricing requirements, supporting documentation, and guidelines for how changes will impact time and cost. When contractors follow these provisions precisely, they protect their right to recover



additional compensation and avoid disputes over whether the change was properly authorized.

Failing to follow a contract's change-order process is one of the most common—and avoidable—sources of conflict on projects. Courts and arbitrators routinely deny claims where the contractor performed extra work without written approval, missed a notice deadline, or failed to provide sufficient backup for cost impacts. Even well-justified changes can be rejected if they were not pursued according to the agreed-upon procedure.

Adhering to change-order provisions also promotes transparency and project efficiency. Written, timely requests allow owners and design professionals to evaluate impacts before the work proceeds, helping control budgets and maintain scheduling clarity. The documented approval process further provides an auditable record that reduces the risk of later disagreement.

Ultimately, a disciplined approach to change orders protects all parties. Contractors secure their entitlement, owners maintain financial control, and projects stay aligned with contractual expectations. By keeping an eye on change-order compliance, contractors can reduce risk, preserve relationships, and keep projects moving forward with clarity and confidence. ■

*Craig Martin is a construction attorney with Lamson Dugan & Murray, LLP law firm in Omaha, Nebraska, and a member of the collaborative Johnson Team. The Johnson Team consists of a group of specialists serving LICA members on matters of significance – planning, protection, and preservation of their businesses and families. If you have any questions, Craig's e-mail is [cmartin@ldmlaw.com](mailto:cmartin@ldmlaw.com).*

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# 401(k) Mandates Are Here: What Contractors Need to Know

Retirement rules are changing, and contractors with crews should pay attention. While the federal government is pushing new requirements under the SECURE 2.0 Act, more than 20 states have already enacted their own retirement savings mandates. If your business has employees, you may be required to offer a retirement plan or enroll in your state's program.

This shift is more than compliance. Contractors are competing for skilled workers, and benefits now play a major role in hiring and retention. Understanding your options ensures you stay compliant without missing an opportunity to strengthen your workforce.

## Federal Update: SECURE 2.0 Requirements That Affect Employers

Beginning with plan years starting in 2025, newly established 401(k) and 403(b) plans must include automatic enrollment for eligible employees. The default contribution rate must begin between 3% and 10% of pay, and plans must automatically increase that rate each year until it reaches at least 10%. Employees may opt out, but plans created after December 29, 2022 are generally required to include this feature unless they fall under a limited exemption.

SECURE 2.0 also expands access for part-time employees. Starting in 2025, workers who complete at least 500 hours of service in each of two consecutive years must be allowed to make elective deferrals. This change brings many seasonal and part-time construction employees into eligibility for the first time.

These federal updates come alongside increasing state enforcement, but it's worth noting one clear advantage for employers who sponsor a 401(k): contribution limits are far higher than the limits for IRAs used by most state-run retirement programs. A 401(k) allows employers and employees to contribute more, structure matches and profit sharing, and create a benefit that supports retention in an industry where talent is increasingly hard to keep.

## State Mandates: Where They Stand Now

Every state program operates a little differently, but most require employers without a retirement plan to enroll in a state-facilitated IRA. Employers remain responsible for registering, uploading payroll data, and submitting contributions. These plans are better than nothing, but they lack the flexibility, contribution limits, and plan design options of a 401(k).



## Regardless of Your State — You Do Have Choices

State-facilitated IRAs offer a straightforward way to meet retirement mandates, but they come with downsides:

- Contribution limits are lower than what many 401(k) plans allow.
- Because they're IRAs, employers cannot deduct employer matching the way typical employer-sponsored retirement plans can.
- Administration (payroll deductions, reporting, compliance) still falls on the employer.

For many construction and land-improvement firms, a private 401(k) — or a pooled-employer option like the MEAP available exclusively to LICA members through our partnership with World Insurance — may make more sense. A professionally managed plan can relieve you of paperwork, provide more flexibility in contributions, and help attract and retain workers.

If your company hasn't reviewed its retirement benefits in the past year, it's worth taking a fresh look at your options. Understanding what your state requires is the first step; knowing what best serves your business is the next.

LICA members who want help evaluating their compliance status or comparing their existing plan to the advantages of the MEAP can speak with:

**Mike Coughlin, CIC, CPIA**  
World Insurance Associates LLC  
mikecoughlin@worldinsurance.com  
201-559-8157

He can walk you through your choices, whether that means enrolling in a state program, setting up a 401(k), or confirming that your current plan meets the rules where you operate. ■



# This Year's Construction Challenges Likely to Continue in 2026 for Land Improvement and Infrastructure

By BRIAN DEERY, LICA Director of Government Relations

A mixture of both positive developments and challenges faced contractors working in the land improvement and public infrastructure markets this year. While the crystal ball is always a little cloudy when trying to project future construction markets, some clear warning signs are already on the horizon. As always, contractors need to remain agile and work with a very sharp pencil when putting together proposals.

Tariffs have had a measurable impact on public-infrastructure projects (roads, bridges, public buildings, utilities) and are influencing how these projects are budgeted, procured, and managed. Some of the impacts include higher material costs, disrupted supply chains, contract risk, and potential delays or scope changes.

Studies have pointed out that increases in tariffs on imported steel and aluminum are putting pressure on infrastructure project budgets. For example, one study describes how doubling tariffs on steel and aluminum can “derail current and planned infrastructure projects” because of price increases, availability issues, and budget/contract uncertainty. Tariffs add uncertainty to sourcing, lead times, and supplier availability. Public agencies working under tight budgets and deadlines have had to adjust designs, extend timelines, and postpone work as a result. A survey by the Associated General Contractors (AGC) noted that newly imposed and announced tariffs are having an impact on construction activity, with 16 percent of firms reporting that at least one project they are working on has been postponed, canceled, or scaled back because of tariffs. Forty-one percent of firms report they have raised prices because of tariffs, and 39 percent have accelerated purchases in anticipation of new tariffs. Only 14 percent of firms report they have switched from foreign to domestic suppliers because of tariffs.

For the land improvement market, tariffs have significantly impacted farmer product sales and therefore income. China retaliated against tariffs imposed by the Trump Administration on imported Chinese products by cutting off purchases of soybeans and other products from U.S. farmers. While a trade agreement was recently reached between President Trump and China's leader Xi Jinping, increased costs associated with imported fertilizers and equipment have led to higher production costs for farmers, limiting their ability to make investments in water conservation, drainage, and other land improvements,



which typically require substantial upfront costs. In addition to financial constraints, sustained tariffs may shift farmers' focus from long-term sustainability to short-term production gains to offset lost revenue.

An additional impact on the agriculture market is the reorganization and reduction in workforce at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. With USDA reducing the number of field offices to five regional offices, obtaining technical support and grant funding for conservation measures has proven difficult. As of this writing, the FY 2026 appropriations for USDA have not been approved by Congress and are embroiled in the government shutdown impasse. The Ag appropriation legislation was reported by the House and passed by the Senate before the shutdown began and is included in one of the year-long measures that Congress is considering separate from the CR funding other programs through the end of January. USDA conservation programs are likely to get a small increase in funding for FY 2026 under this proposal.

Workforce shortages and immigration enforcement have also impacted contractors' ability to bid on projects and, once awarded, to keep them on time and under budget. Construction workforce shortages are the leading cause of project delays as new immigration enforcement efforts have impacted nearly one-third of construction firms, according to the results of a workforce survey conducted by AGC and NCCER. Noting that 92 percent of contractors report they are having a hard

time filling open positions, construction officials called for more funding for construction education and new, lawful ways for people to enter the country to work in the industry.

On the positive side, bipartisan legislation has been introduced in the House to create a new H-2C temporary work visa program for non-agricultural industries like construction that face persistent labor shortages. It would establish an annual cap of 65,000 visas, which could be adjusted based on market needs. Separate legislation has also been introduced to offer a pathway to conditional legal status for non-citizens working in critical industries, including construction and agriculture, providing a pathway to legal status for many undocumented workers in the existing workforce.

Another positive development is a Trump Administration initiative to expedite construction project permitting by streamlining environmental reviews, leveraging technology, and reforming regulations. Strategies include creating clearer timelines, enhancing interagency coordination, and using technology for better project management and transparency. This initiative keeps in play efforts over the past decade to shrink the amount of time it takes to get infrastructure projects approved and moved to construction.

The bottom line is that obstacles facing the industry are surmountable as long as the market stays robust. Construction

infrastructure funding at the federal level remains strong into the coming year. There has been some slowing due to the government shutdown, but thus far the impacts have been minimal. However, reauthorization of funding for highway, bridge, rail, transit, water, and wastewater projects must all be addressed by September 30, 2026. Funding for USDA conservation programs was targeted for significant cuts by the Administration and the House but is now likely to receive increased funding in FY 2026 and potentially stronger support as we get closer to next year's midterm elections. While infrastructure funding has always received strong bipartisan support, as most politicians recognize the value of these projects to their states and local communities, retaining that support in the face of large federal budget deficits and growing debt is of paramount importance to the construction industry. LICA members must be ready to carry the message to their senators and representatives in the coming elections. ■

*Brian Deery brings over 40 years of experience advocating for highway, heavy, and civil construction contractors before Congress and federal agencies. As LICA's Director of Government Relations, he keeps members informed about legislative and regulatory issues that impact the land improvement industry. If you have any questions, Brian's email is [Deery5@gmail.com](mailto:Deery5@gmail.com).*

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# Smarter Work, Smarter Resources: What AEM's New Study Means for Contractors

The Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM) has released a comprehensive study, *From Source to Solution: Advancing Water Stewardship in the Non-Road Sector*, showing how construction, agriculture, and utility industries are saving trillions of gallons of water every year through improved practices and smarter equipment design.

## What the Numbers Show

- U.S. irrigation practices now save an estimated 9.7 trillion gallons of water annually.



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- Utility-sector innovations in the U.S. and Canada have reduced water withdrawals by **nearly 4 trillion gallons each year.**
- Advances in concrete production have cut freshwater use by **up to 20 percent** in new manufacturing.

These findings illustrate how modern equipment and better planning aren't just increasing productivity—they're reducing environmental impact and operating costs.

## What It Means for LICA Members

The takeaway isn't to buy new equipment—it's to **think differently about how existing tools and processes are managed.** Water use on job sites, particularly for dust control and soil compaction, is an operational factor that often flies under the radar. The AEM study underscores that incremental improvements in efficiency can have large-scale results when applied across an industry.

For land improvement contractors, this may mean:

- Calibrating and maintaining dust-control systems to avoid over-watering.
- Scheduling projects to reduce unnecessary equipment travel and idling.
- Exploring partnerships or pilot programs that support sustainable land and water management.

## Expert Perspective

"This study demonstrates that North American equipment manufacturers are doing more than just supplying innovative and cutting-edge equipment — they are enabling some of the most advanced water stewardship practices in the world," said Curt Blades, AEM Senior Vice President of Agriculture Services and Forestry.

## The Bigger Picture

As regulatory pressure grows and clients emphasize sustainability, contractors who can document responsible water use and resource management will stand out. The AEM report highlights that the same efficiency mindset that drives profitability can also strengthen a company's reputation and long-term competitiveness.

To read the full study, visit [newsroom.aem.org](http://newsroom.aem.org). ■

# Market Watch

## Ligchine International Acquires the Power Buggy



Ligchine® International has acquired the Power Buggy Company. The move supports Ligchine's continued growth and reinforces its commitment to delivering industry-leading construction equipment.

The Power Buggy is a quick and versatile ride-on material mover, originating from its development by Morrison in the late 1960s. Over the decades, ownership has transitioned through several respected organizations, including Terex Corporation in the 2000s and later the DiGeronimo Companies, which incorporated the brand into Indy Equipment and Supply Company. The Power Buggy is a well-known product throughout many parts of the United States.

"The Power Buggy is a very high-quality piece of equipment that we will be able to stand behind when providing it to our loyal base of customers, we are proud to be able to continue the growth of this very respected brand." said Kyle Hohmann, President of Ligchine International.

Contact Ligchine at 812-903-4500 or email [sales@ligchine.com](mailto:sales@ligchine.com).

## Kubota Unveils Next-Generation Grand L70 Series Compact Tractors



Kubota Tractor Corporation introduces the new Grand L70 Series, the further evolution of its compact tractor. Engineered for commercial, land-improvement operators, the Grand L70 Series includes three model options (premium, deluxe and cold weather) and delivers advanced technology in the operator seat with a multi-function loader joystick and Intelligent Hydrostatic Transmission.

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## Wind Defender's Stockpile Cover System Provides Reliable Protection



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## Legacy Drainage Equipment Announce New Product Line



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Scan the QR Code with your phone's camera to see the National LICA Benefits. Each benefit has a downloadable flyer that contains details on the benefit and contact information to get started.



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If you want fresh ideas to improve production, extend equipment life, and take advantage of new technology, the Earthmoving track at CONEXPO 2026 is the smartest stop you'll make at the show. These sessions go beyond theory and focus on actionable strategies contractors are using right now to cut costs, work safer, and win bigger jobs.

From innovative site preparation methods and drones in dai-

ly operations to repurposing ADTs and turning compact equipment into high-precision machines, this lineup delivers practical insights you can take straight to the jobsite. You'll also hear first-hand lessons from one of the largest earthmoving undertakings in the country, along with sessions on trench safety and dust control that could save lives and protect your bottom line.

LICA members are encouraged to make these sessions part of their show plan. Stop by the LICA booth in the Grand Lobby – GL20701 and tell us which ones you're attending!

## Earthmoving Track Sessions, Tuesday, March 3

- New Technology in Site Preparation
- Using Drones in Your Earthmoving Business
- From Debris to Dollars: Crushing Startup Secrets
- In the Trenches: An Operator's Perspective on Trench Safety

## Wednesday, March 4

- Dumping the Dump Bed: ADTs That Do More
- Turning Your Excavator Into the Ultimate Multipurpose Machine
- Moving Mountains: Technology Behind South Carolina's New EV Plant

## Thursday, March 5

- Connected Machines: Precision GPS for every machine on the Jobsite
- Machine Control for Compact Equipment and Small Businesses
- Minimizing Crystalline Silica and Airborne Particulates through Efficient Water Tank Usage

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# National Membership Drive

August 1, 2025 October 31, 2025

Do you know a contractor who would benefit from the connections, training, and support that LICA offers?

Help us build a stronger network—invite them to join today!

Every new member adds strength to our voice, credibility to our mission, and support for the future of land improvement.

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**HELP US GROW OUR LICA FAMILY**  
RECRUIT A CONTRACTOR. STRENGTHEN OUR INDUSTRY.

Fill out a membership application at: [LICANational.org](http://LICANational.org)

	<b>Florida</b>	
Unidentified		1
	<b>Indiana</b>	
Website		1
	<b>Kansas</b>	
Unidentified		1
	<b>Ohio</b>	
Field Day		1
Call In		1
Farm Science Review		2
	<b>New Jersey</b>	
Apprenticeship Program		33
	<b>New York</b>	
Maura Dibble		2
David Rule		2
	<b>Virginia</b>	
Unidentified		1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>45</b>

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Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Fax (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

LICA Sponsor \_\_\_\_\_

## Contractor (Type of Business)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> CH Concrete/Hardscaping              | <input type="checkbox"/> PD Ponds/Dams                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CR Crane Service                     | <input type="checkbox"/> RP Roads/Paving                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DB Directional Boring                | <input type="checkbox"/> SP Site Prep./Demolition                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DW Drainage/Water Mgmt./ Irrigation  | <input type="checkbox"/> SS Septic Systems/<br>Onsite Wastewater Treatment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EM Earthmoving/Grading/Land Leveling | <input type="checkbox"/> TH Trucking/Hauling                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EX Excavating/Land Clearing          | <input type="checkbox"/> TW Terraces/Waterways                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GR Gravel/Rock Production            | <input type="checkbox"/> UU Underground Utilities                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LS Landscaping/Seeding/Sod           |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OD Open Ditch Work/Dredging          |  |

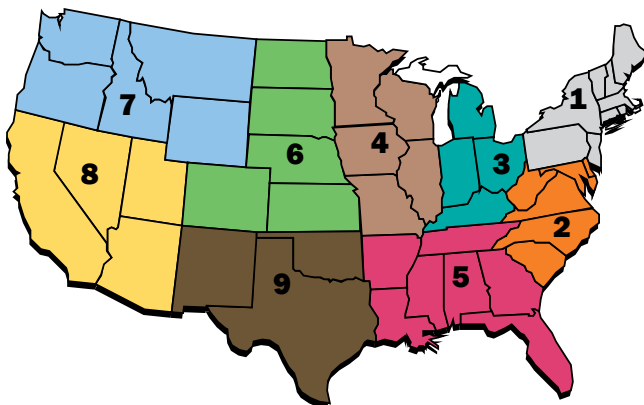
## Application is for (Check One)

- Active Contractor Member (Annual Dues)..... Vary by State Chapter  
*Active Land Improvement Contractor.*
- Company Associate Member (Annual Dues)..... Vary by State Chapter  
*Person or companies manufacturing or selling materials, equipment or services to active contractor members.*
- Supporting Member (Annual Dues)..... Vary by State Chapter  
*Person(s) or associations interested in LICA.*
- National Associate Member ..... \$395.00
- Member-At-Large..... \$195.00  
*Contractors in state without chapters*

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please contact your state chapter for annual dues and additional information. See page 33.**

**To become a national associate please contact:  
National LICA, 3080 Ogden Avenue, Suite 300, Lisle, IL 60532  
Phone 630-548-1984 • Fax: 630-548-9189  
Email: [anational.lica@gmail.com](mailto:anational.lica@gmail.com) • Website: [LICANational.org](http://LICANational.org)**



## STATES WITH MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

■ Idaho

■ Tennessee

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# Don't Get Dropped: Protect Your ELDT Training Provider Status in 2026

By CAROLINE KRUG, Editor *The LICA Contractor*

You may have seen headlines about the FMCSA cracking down on CDL trainers and removing providers from the Training Provider Registry. What many of these stories fail to explain is that most removals had nothing to do with unsafe instruction or curriculum problems. The majority were removed for a much simpler reason: providers did not update their information in the registry as required. When the system showed outdated or unverified details, FMCSA treated them as inactive and removed them.

For in house trainers, this is an entirely avoidable issue. If you are training employees, delivering the required curriculum, and submitting completion records, you are already meeting ELDT standards. The real risk is letting your registry information go stale. FMCSA views inactivity the same way it views non participation.

Current rules require training providers to update their registration within 30 days of any changes to key details, including business name, address, phone number, types of train-

ing offered, provider status, or any change in state licensure, certification, or accreditation. Providers must also complete a biennial update to confirm their registration even if nothing has changed.

To protect your status:

- Log in to the Training Provider Registry regularly and verify that your information is current.
- Review business details, instructor listings, and contact information for accuracy.
- Submit training completion records promptly after each employee finishes.

If your information is current, you should have no trouble staying on the registry. The recent removals serve as a reminder that FMCSA expects active account management. In house ELDT programs are a valuable asset for land improvement contractors. Do not let paperwork or a missed update block your employees from earning a CDL. Keeping your profile updated is the simplest step you can take to protect that advantage. ■

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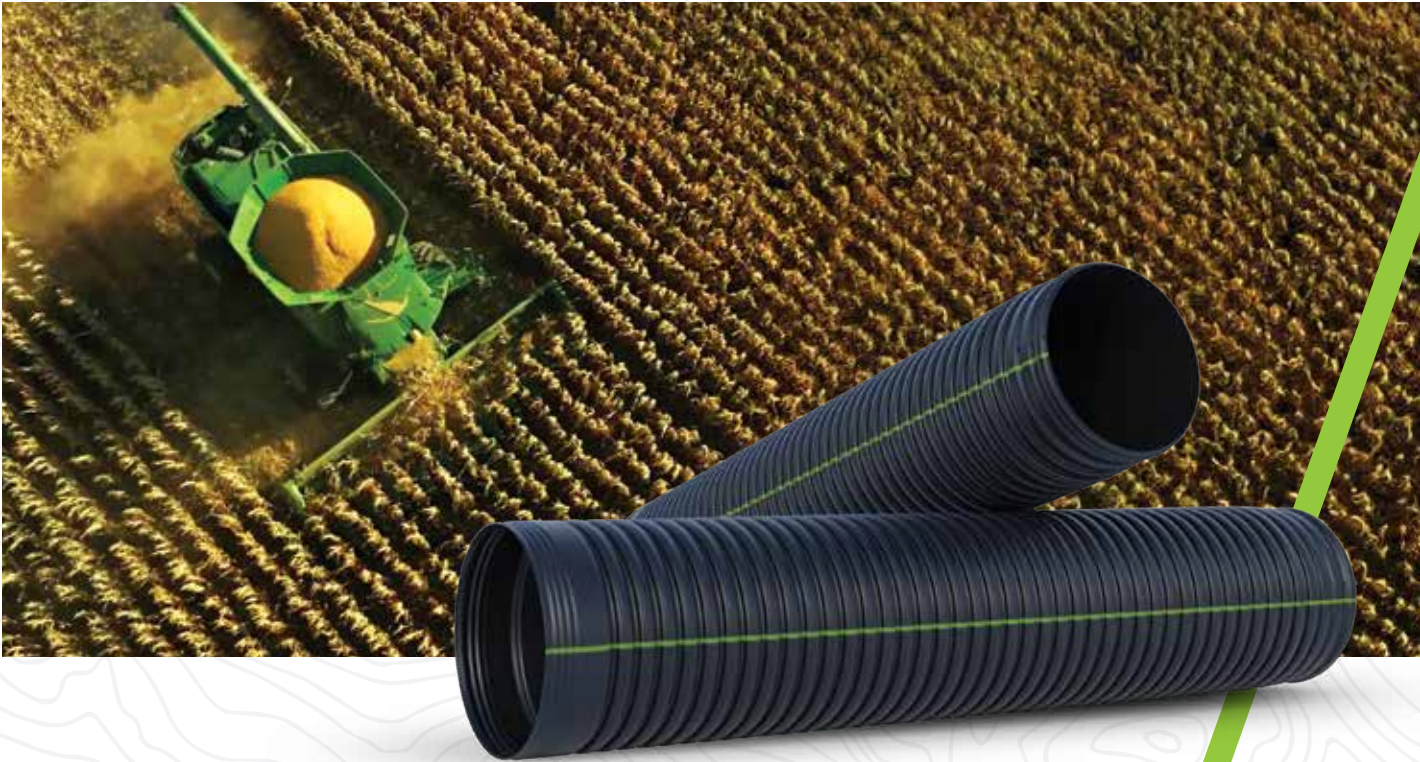
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