Training Update

We asked various unions and training programs to provide us with information about their offerings, and we heard from the Operative Plasterers and Cement Masons International Association and the International Masonry Institute. The information they provided is published in this article, but we also have included contact information for other programs, and have provided a short description of their offerings if that information was available on their Web site.

The Operative Plasterers and Cement Masons International Association of the United States and Canada (OPCMIA)
Department of Apprenticeship and Training

Training and skills enhancement is the key to the future of America’s plastering industry. The OPCMIA, with its network of local Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committees and support from the OPCMIA Department of Apprenticeship and Training, is the leading trainer of plasterers throughout the United States and Canada. The National Plastering Industry’s Joint Apprenticeship and Training Fund administers the OPCMIA Job Corps program throughout the United States. The Trust is comprised of equal representation from the Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industries—International and the OPCMIA.

Over the last five years, the numbers of our apprentice members has risen 33 percent. Our programs are continually improving their facilities and expanding programs to train our members and your employees in the plaster systems that your customers are demanding. This exemplifies the commitment our local Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committees have to the future of our industry.

Training has to be a partnership. Our local JATCs are composed of equal representation from management and labor, with the majority of the management representatives being AWCI members. It is not a coincidence that those most active in industry associations are also the most active in the training of future plasterers.

Three years ago, General President John Dougherty appointed committees representing all geographical areas of the...
OPCMIA to develop curriculums for both the plastering and concrete finishing apprenticeship programs. The committee members are all hands-on trainers and instructors from our programs. Industry experts assist as needed and review all materials.

The plastering industry has never had a full four-year curriculum for training plasterers. Previously, plasterer instructors and apprenticeship programs have had to develop their programs and course outlines from our national standards and resources and materials available in the industry. Other than in the exterior insulation and finish systems industry, publications from USG and National Gypsum and books written by OPCMIA trainers many years ago, there has not been a wealth of information available. Upon completion, the OPCMIA curriculum will be the total resource for training plasterers.

Our goal is to train all our plasterers in all facets of the plastering industry. While a quick fur may be needed to
remedy a need in EIFS, for instance, apprentices should have the knowledge to work on any type of work for any employer. The curriculum will include veneer and full thickness plaster systems, fireproofing, ornamental plaster, EIFS and all traditional plaster systems that have been taught by our programs. The plastering industry continues to change. Training is also required in today’s “ancient modern” Venetian finishes, Level 5, themescape plaster and other new and improved materials that are constantly being developed to make us more competitive and artistic.

We also understand that the use and applications of our materials are only a part of what a well rounded and trained plasterer needs in today’s work environment. The OPCMIA curriculum and training programs also provide instruction in construc-
tion mathematics, measuring and layout. Today’s laser and other measuring and leveling systems are taught. We train your foremen and superintendents.

Our apprenticeship instructors attended our Annual OPCMIA Apprenticeship Instructor Training Seminar the week of July 8, 2002, which offered a wide assortment of classes for the instructors. We hold the Training Seminar in conjunction with our trainers from the OPCMIA Job Corps. This enables us to bring together 200 of the premier trainers in the country and upgrade their instruction skills. While we recognize that our trainers possess the best plastering skills anywhere, we also recognize that as teachers, our skills may need to be continually refined. Our seminars feature sessions on presentation to students and effective teaching methods. We also have sessions on how to evaluate their math skills and how to teach accordingly. We are offering a session on skills and techniques for teaching blueprints.

Today’s classroom is constantly changing. To improve our methods of delivery, we are offering sessions on beginning and advanced PowerPoint presentations. Live manufacturer demonstrations will be presented on stencil systems and marmorino finishes. An OSHA 500 course will be conducted throughout the entire week.

The sessions will close with roundtable discussions where the instructors share their training successes, offer insight to
their training problems and give suggestions as to where the OPCMIA Department of Apprenticeship should evolve in the future.

Safety on job sites has changed incredibly over the last 20 years. We provide you with today’s safest work force. We conduct two OSHA 500s a year to enable our instructors to attend at their convenience. The instructors then return to your area and provide OSHA 10 Hour classes to your employees.

We have developed a contact dermatitis safety program that is available to all of our programs. Our local JATC in Portland, Ore., developed a silica hazard video to make your employees aware of the dangers of our materials to them and their families.

We regularly hold scaffold train-the-trainer sessions to enable our instructors to deliver these classes, again, to your employees in their home area. We continue to provide 40 Hour HAZWOPER Training and 16 Hour Confined Space Training.

All these safety programs are offered at no charge to our employers.

As recognition for a job well done, the OPCMIA holds periodic Apprenticeship Competitions. Our last Competition was held in 2001 at the World of Concrete in Las Vegas, Nev., with 25 plasterer apprentices from throughout the International
alongside 40 cement mason apprentices. These apprentice contestants were all the winners of local or regional competitions. Space constraints limit the number of contestants. We only wish we could have a competition where all the contestants from our regional competitions could display their skills.

The competition booths contain EIFS, hardcoat plaster, ornamental cornice, decorative interior finish (marmorino) and a plaster texture with all layout performed by the contestants. We look forward to our next International Competition, which will be held at the World of Concrete, Feb. 4-7, 2003, in Las Vegas. Come out and see the best North America has to offer.

Apprenticeship is the investment in our future. It is a partnership between labor and management. It is the only way it can survive.

Anyone desiring more information on our programs may contact the OPCMIA Department of Apprenticeship and Training at (301) 470-4200.

Many plaster contractors are experiencing the “good problem” of finding qualified craftworkers. Thanks to the International Masonry Institute’s national apprenticeship and training system, there is also a good solution. Or rather, numerous solutions that address the training needs of craftworkers throughout their careers, from new apprentices to instructors and supervisors.

IMI is a joint labor/management cooperative program of the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers and union contractors. In addition to BAC plaster training efforts at the local level, IMI provides a comprehensive framework for meeting both immediate and long-range plaster training needs.

At its National Training Center in Fort Ritchie, Md., IMI conducts ongoing entry-level plaster training throughout the year. The Center also develops custom programs as needed, such as a recent aerated autoclaved concrete coatings class that brought apprentices and instructors from all over the country up to
speed on the newest products and techniques. IMI’s 12-week pre-job plaster course, offered all year long, provides contractors with apprentice craftworkers able to start working with a level of skill and familiarity dramatically more productive than the on-the-job approach. Just as importantly, it trains them in critical workplace behavior such as safety awareness and professionalism.

The curriculum covers traditional plaster and stucco work, exterior insulation and finish systems and AAC coatings. And participants in other training programs, such as brick or terrazzo, get exposed to the plastering trade. EIFS Familiarization classes are held in July and August.

Plaster Instructor John Totten is pleased to see the level of interest in young craftworkers. “The plaster trade is growing every day,” he says.

Totten and other IMI training officials also develop training programs “to go” in response to a particular areas market needs. Deploying its mobile training system—essentially a classroom and training school on wheels—IMI conducts training specific to area needs.

In New Orleans this spring, for example, IMI sponsored a 12-week pre-job plastering program in conjunction with Local 6
LA/MS/AL to beef up the local work force in short order.

In Westchester, N.Y., a similar need for entry-level workers was met with a 12-week pre-job program that covered three-coat plaster, EIFS, cornice and ornamental plastering. The BAC local, 5 NY, also wanted to reach out to minority communities with career opportunities. “We had to give the plastering industry a boost, and it worked out well,” says Local 5 official Manny Valente.

In Green Bay, Wis., BAC Field Representative Owen Jones turned to IMI to upgrade current members’ skills, “because I wanted them to learn the right way,” he says. Jones works closely with contractors in his area to monitor market needs and trends. He says contractors were “thrilled” to see the upgrade training. “It has shown that BAC does train its people. Contractors notice what we spend on training. It’s an investment for everyone.”

Learning “the right way” is no accident. IMI has strict standards for its instructors, as well as those at the BAC local level. Every year, it holds the Instructor Certification Program, which covers professional, technical and topical subjects. While many instructors may teach predominantly another trowel trade, IMI makes sure that all are familiar with each trade, including plastering.

New ICP attendees start with a “Basic Plaster Craft Familiarization” course. Then there are continuing courses, like a recent ICP stucco class that covered ASTM standards for preparing and applying stucco mixes, along with proper lath application, accessory installation and materials curing procedures. An elective course on exterior insulation combined technical information, demonstrations and hands-on applications. ICP also covers all construction
industry basics, from respirators to scaffolding, estimating to blueprint reading.

In keeping with IMI’s emphasis on professional standards, ICP graduates are now eligible for college credit. IMI has partnered with the National Labor College to offer college degree programs for BAC members, with credit given for work experience. Other educational partnerships are in the works.

New in 2002 is IMI’s Supervisor Certification Program, a logical extension of IMI’s Contractor College education and certification program.

Over the past year, IMI has launched a host of initiatives to enrich both the apprentice and journey-level experience for BAC members. On the apprenticeship front, IMI A&T officials are making apprenticeship standards more uniform, and developing a national curriculum for all BAC crafts.

For BAC journeymen and women, IMI’s lifelong learning programs include cross-craft training in all BAC crafts and Continuing Education programs in restoration, new products such as AAC coatings, safety and more. Wrapping up all these efforts is the new A&T Skills Data Base, which tracks and documents the lifelong acquired skills of BAC members.

A critical part of this strategy is effective recruitment. Following a successful round of radio ads and new recruitment materials in 2001, ongoing efforts include targeting of audiences and tailoring of messages, and preparing instructors for changing demographics.

This national network allows BAC craftworkers and contractors to keep up on the latest industry products and installation and repair issues, such as EIFS and AAC coatings. It also lets union contractors address sensitive projects with confidence. The blueprint for this exhaustive effort has been the BAC A&T Task Force Report issued in 2000, a collaborative effort among BAC, IMI training staff contractors and other experts, dedicated to getting the industry well prepared for the future.

For details on any IMI training programs, call (800) JOBS-IMI.