

From March through June, construction of the A9 in Scotland was shut down under government orders. As lockdowns are lifted and projects resume, the industry looks for a rebound.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF TRANSPORT SCOTLAND

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International Construction & Engineering Industry Showcase

Knowing No Boundaries

A united call for global growth and recovery

By Kate Gawlik

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Borders Reopen as Work Resumes Worldwide

Just as COVID-19 doesn't discriminate in who contracts the virus, the pandemic has left no global market unaffected. From project shutdowns to a loss of funding and worker safety concerns, the international construction industry has slowed overall.

BL Harbert International (BLHI) serves U.S. federal and private defense clients internationally. The company is currently building in 17 countries and has felt the impact of the pandemic. Mike Veal, senior vice president of BLHI, says, "The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone. BLHI has made necessary adjustments to mitigate potential issues. The company is required to follow the guidelines set by both the local host country and the U.S. government. BLHI has and will continue to make the safety of its workers and staff its top priority."

American Global serves Latin America and the Caribbean, especially countries with higher infrastructure expenditures like Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Panama and Peru. Ricardo Davila, head of international at American Global, notes, "COVID-19 has impacted the construction industry across the borders. Some governments have reacted more aggressively, setting different restrictions for both existing and new projects, while others have maintained construction as essential to sustain the economy. Our work has been impacted primarily by the stoppage of some construction projects, as well as delays in awarding and commencing new projects. During the first half of 2020, a large number of projects were delayed, creating a gap between the projected revenues for the year that we hope to recover during the first six months of 2021."

The international construction industry started strong in 2020, but now several firms are looking to 2021 to make up losses. Davila says,

"We have an optimistic outlook for the construction industry because one of the main drivers of an economic recovery is the investment in infrastructure. Governments should invest in new projects to generate jobs and materials consumption to recover from losses created in other industries."

One project shut down in March was Transport Scotland's doubling of 80 miles of A9 single-lane roads between Perth and Inverness. The government embarked on this £3-billion project in 2019 to improve road safety, decrease journey times throughout Scotland and make transportation more reliable. The project also looks to boost local economies with better access to the Highlands and Islands. The project is set to complete in 2025 if the team can make up lost time. As the government set fourth guidelines for physical distancing, Balfour Beatty implemented a managed shutdown of the job, which included ensuring the site and its equipment were safe while not in operation. The project team safely restarted work in mid-June.

In Scotland and around the globe, the past several months have given firms time to implement new plans and refocus their energies on growing a global market. Kleopatra Kyrimi, group marketing and communications manager for Sarens, says, "We see the impact of the pandemic as a phenomenon that can be countered if certain measures are taken. Safety is every company's north at this point. Also, diversification of the business is key, offering alternatives when we encounter slowdowns in certain sectors of our work. Last, despite the crisis, city infrastructures, sustainable energy projects and other work will still be priorities in 2020–21, as they involve structures and goods that are still necessary for society to function even if there are lockdowns." ♦

Soldier Pile Wall Used on Puerto Rico Expressway

A unique soldier pile wall is being installed in San Juan, Puerto Rico, as a retaining wall in the widening of Express Roadway PR-18. The area surrounding the wall was a previously cut, landscaped slope, and the Puerto Rico Dept. of Transportation (PRDOT) wanted to save as many of the trees as possible.

Anderson Vasquez of Behar Ybarra & Associates is a design engineer with more than 30 years of experience, particularly in the infrastructure arena. He is always looking for new ways to make construction projects easier and more practical.

Nucor Skyline produced both the HP 14 x 89 piles and the SKS 11, SKS 14 and SKS 16 sheet piles that were used for the soldier pile wall. The partially buried row of SKS sheet piles were fully coated with coal tar epoxy to extend their life by 15 years and comply with the PRDOT's 75-year lifespan code. A drainage system was also installed in the cut behind the wall to minimize hydrostatic pressures in the soil.

The H-piles were inserted to design depth into pre-drilled holes and back-filled with concrete, taking the earth's lateral loads into consideration as a cantilever element. The coated SKS sheets were then installed horizontally for a pleasing aesthetic, and also to save time and money over concrete panels.

For additional information, please visit www.nucorskyline.com. ♦



A soldier pile wall helps to minimize any damage to trees along PR-18 in Puerto Rico.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF BEHAR YBARRA & ASSOCIATES



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The Success of Sectional Barges in Waterways Around the World

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Poseidon Barge's fleet of equipment can be seen in rivers, waterways and seas around the globe, serving contractors in heavy highway construction, dredging, marine and diving with portable sectional barges and dredging equipment. New and used barges are



The site limitations when constructing the Highway 17 bridge over the Pays Plat River in Ontario, Canada, were overcome with Poseidon Portable Sectional Barges.

available for sale or charter lease, and the Poseidon Barge crew will work with contractors to ensure that the right equipment is selected.

In Canada, FACCA used its Poseidon Portable Sectional Barges to demolish and replace precast sections of Highway 17 over the Pays Plat River in Ontario. FACCA removed the old bridge sections, drove piles to accept replacements and then placed sections weighing up to 63,000 lbs each, all while using a Kobelco 110-ton crane. Work was performed on a platform of Poseidon P2 7-ft barges configured to a 100- x 40-ft size. Their versatility allowed FACCA to access the crossing from the river without a costly causeway.

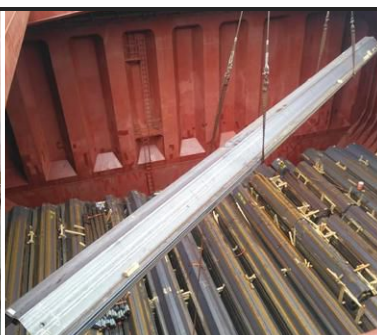
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Throughout its history, OEC has been responsible for executing more than 2,500 major projects, including hydroelectric, thermal and nuclear power plants, bridges, flyovers, tunnels, subway lines and urban trains, airports, ports, railways and industrial projects.

OEC currently has a presence in nine countries, employing more than 18,000 members of different nationalities for both public and private clients. Always characterized as being a company focused on entrepreneurialism and innovation, OEC has formulated solutions to create major impacts on construction sites by optimizing materials and taking the time to execute services with environmental considerations. These and other processes ensure an internationally recognized technical quality on its projects. ♦



Port of Tuxpan Success Story

PORT REHABILITATION — VERACRUZ, MÉXICO

PROBLEM

- Port was in need of rehabilitation to accommodate larger oil cargo ships
- Dredging required for navigation of larger vessels

SOLUTION

- Nucor Skyline supplied the AZ sheets for the two sheet pile walls
- Walls were tied together with 82 foot long, upset threaded M80/60 tie rods
- A fully submerged cantilevered wall, using AZ 25-800 sheet piles, was used for the dredging of the river

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The Lauca Hydroelectric Power Station will be the largest power station in Angola when complete this year.



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Respecting and Celebrating Employee Diversity at Home and Abroad

An initiative created in 2018 that celebrates diversity on each construction project, BL Harbert International's (BLHI's) Respect Challenge Tour continues in 2020 with some modifications for current practices. With 8,000 employees representing 56 nationalities, BLHI started the program because it recognized a way to bring people together from around the world.

"We saw a unique opportunity to make a difference," says BLHI President Chuck Bohn. "Our company is built on respect, and rather than just telling our employees this, we wanted to show them respect."



BL Harbert International's Respect Challenge Tour recently traveled to Guatemala, where the USL soccer team, Birmingham Legion FC, held a clinic with BLHI's employees.

During the Respect Tour, the leadership team travels to each overseas project to spread the message of respect and humanity. "It's really simple. No matter your race, religion, ethnicity or gender, you deserve to be treated with respect," Bohn says. At its essence, the initiative ensures that every BLHI employee receives a Respect Challenge Coin and signs a banner, pledging to be respectful both at work and in life.

Last year, the Respect Tour traveled to Erbil, Iraq, where students from the local university painted a mural for the workers that embodied respect. A few short weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic began, the Respect Tour traveled to Guatemala, where 1,200 employees came together for the tour. BLHI hosted the USL Soccer Team, Birmingham Legion FC, in Guatemala. A clinic with the professional players was a highlight for many BLHI employees.

With COVID-19, BLHI is finding creative ways to continue this message. "We're interested in hosting virtual Respect Tours because this message is so important to who we are and what we're working to accomplish," Bohn says.

To date, BLHI has hosted tours in Dubai, Mexico, Niger, Qatar, Turkey, Iraq, Guatemala and the United States. ♦

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Construction Horizon in Latin America After COVID-19

By Ricardo Davila, Head of International, American Global

We all have seen the impact of COVID-19 in the U.S. construction industry. The international market is not much different. American Global supports our clients in regions like Latin America (LATAM). We have witnessed construction decline outside of the United States during the first half of the year due to local emergency orders. Although construction was defined as an essential activity in most of the countries, the mobility and transportation of labor and materials directly impacted the progress at jobsites. Some countries like Argentina and Colombia had stronger regulations than their neighbors. Others, such as Brazil and Mexico, had a more flexible working

environment. Some companies have projected up to 25% revenue impact for 2020 throughout the region. In addition to the impact in revenue, new projects have been put on hold permanently or delayed due to the pandemic.

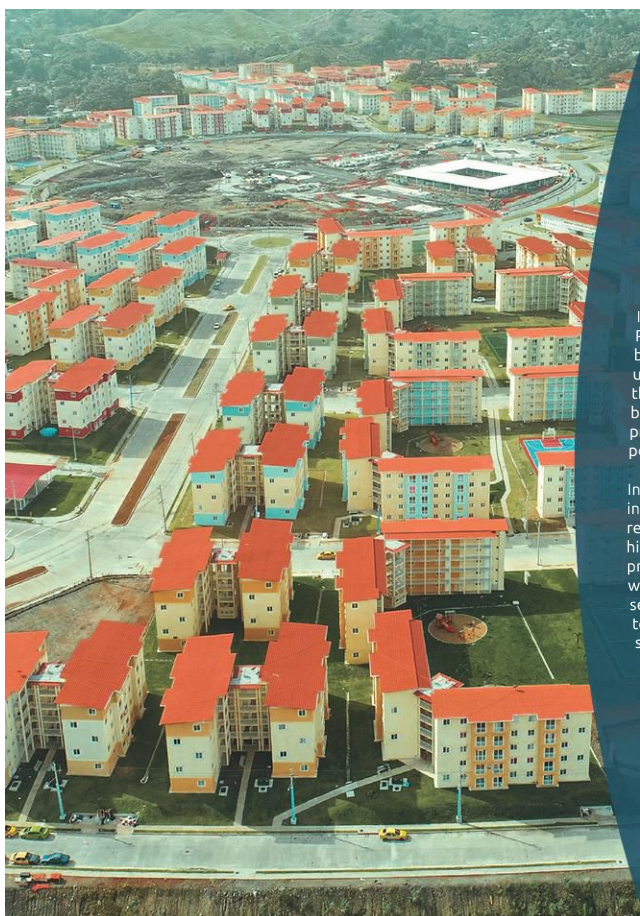
The different economies in the LATAM region will face challenges to recover the productivity in construction due to budget restraints and the economic environment. They are nonetheless determined to launch construction as a motor to recover the economy.

Companies involved in international construction should monitor the development of the market. Opportunities will rise from the need to develop the economy through investment in infra-

structure. We all need to understand the different risks associated with the current situation. Some risks to monitor are payment, funding, availability of resources and productivity. Watching these and others will maximize profitability in an already slowed market.

For 2021, we expect to have a better year with more opportunities and the award of projects that were originally planned for delivery in 2020. Our suggestion is to monitor the opportunities and the market conditions.

American Global supports our client's surety needs in the region and has participated in major infrastructure projects in LATAM. For more details, visit www.americanglobal.com. ♦



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In 2020, The Colón Reurbanization Project, an initiative of the government of Panama, was a recipient of the Global Project of the Year award, the highest among all categories. Now, upon delivery, the project has benefited more than 25 thousand people, who will have access to suitable housing, public services and recreational facilities. This fills our teams with pride and renews our willingness to serve and accomplish more.

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