



# Industry Reporter

WINTER 2021



**ACCO Engineering Systems**

**Women in Construction: Karen Fox**

**STORIES FOR A BETTER WORLD**

It is with great pleasure that I introduce myself as editor of the *SMACNA-Southern California Industry Reporter*, official journal of record for SMACNA-SoCal. I am excited by the prospect of getting to know the *Reporter's* readers and their interests, and I look forward to playing a part in the association's mission to promote and support contractors and their expertise.

When I started as a journalist at the tender age of 19, I was on fire to change the world. I thought the best way to do that was to chase big stories with international focus and to tackle the difficult, political issues no one wanted to talk about. In university, I had a writing professor who had been a journeywoman carpenter in the early 1970s when women in construction were practically unheard of. She encouraged me to write about the trades and I laughed—*How is that going to change the world?* I asked. She smiled. *Just do it*, she said.

More than 20 years and countless interviews and stories later, I know she was right. This work of telling the stories of the men and women who have built our continent from the ground up and toiled to make our lives healthier, safer, more accessible, and unbelievably beautiful is changing the world. We are archiving this aspect of our collective history and showcasing the importance of a strong and viable industry, a cooperative industry where building relationships and trust is as important to a better future for industry as building schools and hospitals.



By / Jessica Kirby, Editor

Similarly, in 1995 Joe and Lara Perraton, a brother and sister team with deep roots in the forest industry, decided that they wanted to connect foresters with one another and with the resources they needed to improve their trade. They launched their first in-print and online resources for foresters, and expanded to other trades over the following decade. Twenty-six years later, their company, Point One Media, still thrives, telling the stories of construction professionals across Canada and the United States with pride.

The *SoCal Industry Reporter* will land on your desks and in your email boxes four times per year. I hope you enjoy this first issue, and I encourage you to let me know what you think. We will be looking for companies to profile, individuals to highlight, and issues to address, so if you have any ideas to share, please send them along. I can't wait to tell your story. ■

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Official Journal of Record for  
SMACNA-SOCAL



## A NEW ERA BEGINS

Welcome to the premier edition of the *SMACNA Southern California Industry Reporter*. This publication is a seed, planted by the association's board of directors at a recent strategic planning meeting. Of course, a seed is a sign of hope and promise, a wealth of potential, and an opportunity for growth—literal and figurative—as those tending it collaborate and put forth collective effort to see it blossom and succeed.

SMACNA-Southern California is led by a conscientious, active board of directors driven by a single mission—increase the visibility of and add value to the membership. During the 10-year strategic plan retreat we developed a vision for our chapter moving forward, and that vision includes doing the work required to promote our industry and membership.

As a result, the board entered into this relationship with Point One Media—a publishing company with nearly 30 years' experience publishing for the trades and that manages several publications in our industry, including *Sheet Metal Journal-British Columbia* for SMACNA-BC; *Sheet Metal Journal-Western Washington* for SMACNA-Western Washington; and *Partners in Progress* for the SMART-SMACNA Best Practices Market Expansion Task Force.

We are asking that our members help this publication realize its full potential by contributing story ideas, notes about your projects, information for company profiles, and other company news and events that readers should know about. Let us know what you are working on, what you are most proud of, and what you would like to learn more about. The time commitment is minimal—send in your ideas and our editor, Jessica Kirby ([jkirby@pointonemedia.com](mailto:jkirby@pointonemedia.com)) will do the work of crafting articles that reflect our best work. You will have the final approval of anything that goes to press. It is a smooth, simple process and the easiest way to bring the spotlight to your expertise in the sheet metal industry.

In July, we negotiated a collective agreement that will expire July 1, 2021. We will be concentrating on negotiations for the coming year and will be focusing our efforts on a longer-term



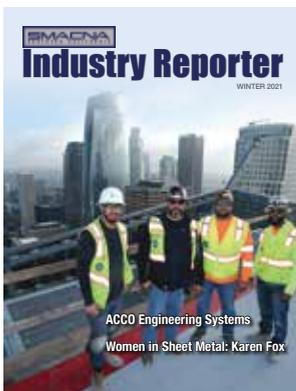
By / Hector Vargas,  
SMACNA-SoCal President

***“We are here to provide guidance and support to our contractor members as we move collectively into a new future, full of challenges and opportunities.”***

contract that meets current market conditions and maintains our competitiveness for years to come. Your input is important to me, and to help in this effort a market survey was developed and emailed to you. Most, if not all, should have received a call from a Labor Committee Member or myself asking for help in our effort and in returning your completed survey. We will keep you posted as negotiations progress.

We are also focused on helping our organization evolve and become more identifiable to members. As a board, we are sensitive to the growing nature of SMACNA-Southern California, and that includes the growth of our member companies. We are here to provide guidance and support to our contractor members as we move collectively into a new future, full of challenges and opportunities.

This publication is here to help you shine and to spread the word about the fantastic work SMACNA contractors are achieving in our region. We look forward to seeing each and every one of you in these pages in issues to come. ■



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Courtesy of ACCO Engineering Systems

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**WAYNE E. LYONS, GRAYCON INC.**

Wayne Lyons is serving his first two-year term as a director on the SMACNA-Southern California board. His company, Graycon Inc., specializes in sheet metal, piping, plumbing, and service in commercial, healthcare, and industrial projects. He has been in the sheet metal industry for 30 years, inspired by growing up in a neighborhood with a few dads who were sheet metal workers in Local 108.

After high school, he attended the HVAC program at Cypress College, allured by the fact that the HVAC program offered a variety of career paths. "I figured it was a safe career since the majority of places need HVAC," Lyons says. He took a part-time job with a small HVAC outfit while going through the program, and one day at school a gentleman from Cal Air came in looking for a project engineer.

"I took his phone number and decided to give him a call," Lyons says. "A few weeks

later, he gave me a job working in the office as a project engineer." Twenty-five years of experience and a good work ethic led Lyons up the career ladder, and he and a business partner eventually bought Graycon Inc. from a long time SMACNA board member.

Over the years, Lyons has learned that the principle to live by is, "Do things right the first time. Even if it takes longer, it is always safer and beneficial to do things right the first time." Besides COVID-19, the ongoing battle of competing with the unskilled labor force has been the industry's greatest challenge, and its most important change has been ever-changing technology. "As soon as we think we are up with technology, it changes," he says. "Our biggest opportunity for the future will be overcoming the pandemic."

SMACNA is essential in a strong way forward because it represents the best



interests of members, the industry, and labor negotiations. "As board members, we always make decisions based on input from the majority and what is best for the industry," Lyons says. ■

**SPECIAL BULLETIN**

**SMART LOCAL 105 – LOS ANGELES/ORANGE EMPIRE  
JANUARY 2021 WAGE AND FRINGE PACKAGE INFORMATION**

In accordance with the Collective bargaining Agreement (CBA) effective July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, the wage and fringe benefit package shall remain unchanged from the June 24, 2020 notice. All wages, fringes, and fund contributions shall be paid as stated on the notice signed by SMACNA Southern California and SMART Local 105 effective January 1, 2021.

The mileage rate established is \$0.575 per mile. See Zone and Subsistence.

For more information or for a full copy of the Wage and Fringe Package please call the union office at 909.305.2800.

	Journeyman Wages	Foreman/Detailer	General Foreman
Hourly Taxable Wage (no change)	\$48.28	\$55.52	\$57.94
* Savings Plan (taxable)	-10%	-10%	-10%
* 401(a) Plan (mandatory)	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00
* Retiree's Supplemental Health Plan	\$0.45	\$0.45	\$0.45
* Health Plan	\$10.60	\$10.60	\$10.60
* Health Reimbursement Acct. (HRA)	\$0.50	\$0.50	\$0.50
* Local Pension	\$11.82	\$11.82	\$11.82
** Local Training (JATC)	\$0.70	\$0.70	\$0.70
*** National Training (ITI)	\$0.12	\$0.12	\$0.12
*** National Pension	\$4.27	\$4.27	\$4.27
*** NEMI	\$0.03	\$0.03	\$0.03
*** SMOHIT	\$0.02	\$0.02	\$0.02
**** LMCT/FP-ACC	\$0.09	\$0.09	\$0.09
<b>Total Wage Package</b>	<b>\$77.88</b>	<b>\$85.12</b>	<b>\$87.54</b>
**** Industry Fund	\$0.56	\$0.56	\$0.56
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$78.44</b>	<b>\$85.68</b>	<b>\$88.10</b>

\* For information regarding remittance payable name and the remittance mailing address, refer to  
 \*\* SMACNA SoCal for a copy of "Funds Payment and Remittance Reporting Procedure effective July 1, 2019."  
 \*\*\* Working Dues rate - No Change: Effective July 1, 2020, the dues check off rate remains at \$2.26 per hour worked.

# Women in Construction

Karen Fox is an inspiration to women in the industry

by Natalie Bruckner



“With hard work, you can be anything you want to be. Your future is in your hands.” These were the words of wisdom spoken to Karen Fox by her mother when Karen was a young girl—words she now credits to her success in both business and life.

Today, Fox is not only president of the testing and balancing agency Precision Air Balance in California; she has also served as president of Orange Empire (OE) SMACNA, chair of the National Legislative Committee, has been nominated to the College of Fellows, was part of the legislative force in California and Washington DC for pension reform, and is the proud mother of three daughters, grandmother of five, and wife of 47 years to business partner Dennis.

Growing up, Fox knew that one day she wanted to run her own business, and she was willing to go above and beyond to make that dream come true.

After completing her business major, she dipped her toes in the construction sector working part time for a general contractor for two years. In 1987, with a growing number of tools on her belt and her husband by her side (who had worked as a sheet metal worker for 14 years and completed 10 years of air balance experience), they decided it was time to branch out on their own and open the doors to Precision Air Balance.

“It was a natural progression for us,” she says. “We felt, if you can’t bet on yourselves, who can you bet on? I have never been afraid of hard work. I knew the challenge of working in a man’s world would be to prove myself as an equal, but I had previously worked in a retail buying office that prepared me for this.”

However, as any young entrepreneur knows, continuing education would be essential to keep relevant and at the top of her game... and Fox took every opportunity that came along.

“Over the years I relied on the educational opportunities provided by our national SMACNA groups, SMACNA SoCal, and Local 105,” she explains. “I took part in training through the Local and JATC, and through the TABB organization for technicians.”

This commitment to continuing education paid off, and in return Fox wanted to give back, assisting in efforts of awareness and recruitment. After becoming a member of the Labor Management Co-operation Trust she had the opportunity to help mold outreach programs to local high schoolers.

“There are so many young people whose path is not four years of college,” Fox says. “These programs give young adults the opportunity to be exposed to an alternative career path, one

that pays well and provides endless opportunities. It gives them a chance to earn while they learn.”

This wasn’t the first time Fox was involved in recruitment efforts—something so essential to the future of the industry. In the late 90s, she was involved with Cal SMACNA’s effort to build a coalition for career technical training called Coalition for Construction in the Classrooms (CCC), raising awareness around construction among grade school students.

For Fox, raising awareness among young women is a passion, and she is excited to see some big changes happening. “I have been involved on SMACNA boards since 1993 and in the past year two more women have joined our SMACNA SoCal board. This is amazing and long overdue.

“The traditional mold of a woman has been broken and an industry that was formally a man’s world, is now an avenue for women to expand their sights.”

As a member of the Women in Construction Leadership Council Steering Committee organizing team, she continues to advocate for women in construction and says there have been some big changes of late. “Participation continues to grow each year,” she says. “It is amazing to work with Angie Simon, SMACNA National President and CEO of Western Allied Mechanical, Julie Mueller, Executive Vice-president of SMACNA-Western Washington, and many others on this committee.”

While Fox admits being a woman in the industry is not an easy road, she says it’s incredibly worthwhile and believes women bring with them certain attributes. “Women are often more outspoken. They analyze the workplace differently than men do, and then have to take a step above to prove themselves capable—that keeps the industry on its toes.”

Fox acts as an inspiration to young women everywhere, so much so that two of her daughters work alongside her in the business, and her daughter Kelli and her husband will be taking over the reigns when Fox retires.

With countless years’ experience behind her, what advice would Fox give women who are considering entering the sheet metal industry? “Work hard, learn as much as you can about the industry, and get involved. If you do this, you will help shape your future and the future of this industry. ■



# ACCO Engineered Systems

An Industry Leader Since 1934

By / Robin Brunet

The Inglewood Stadium, the Metropolis, and the Wilshire Grand Center are just a few of the recent projects that benefitted from ACCO Engineered Systems' skill in the realms of design, fabrication, installation, maintenance, and service of HVAC components and systems on a large scale.

Simply put, ACCO's job is making buildings habitable and functional. Its devotion to that objective has enabled the employee-owned company to grow from its beginnings as a servicer of air conditioners in 1934 to the largest mechanical contractor in the western U.S. today, with just under 4,000 employees in 30 offices and four fabrication plants.

Most importantly, ACCO's huge range of services is informed by unwavering attention to safety. "Our devotion to safety doesn't stem from the goal to meet regulations per se," says Donovan Seeber, ACCO's VP of corporate safety. "Instead, it stems from a deeper desire to protect one another."

ACCO has always been interested in providing the most comprehensive mechanical engineering solutions possible, and marketing director Damion Martin says that expansion in this regard was facilitated by a collective mindset. "Then

as now, we've benefitted from a free flow of information between staff in the field, project managers, and engineering," he explains. "Our eagerness to work together to develop thoughtful and creative solutions is one of our most enduring strengths."

So, too, is the organic approach to safety, which Seeber says kicked into high gear a decade ago with robust investment in safety teams and resources. "We have the union mindset of watching out for our brothers and sisters, which makes sense considering we regard our staff as family," he explains.

ACCO's approach to safety (whose provision is delivered by directors for the company's north and south regions, 20 safety professionals in management, and 10 site-specific professionals), has enjoyed strong buy-in from Local 105 membership. The same holds true for another key element of the company's success: its training programs, which have been developed by ACCO and Local 105.

Mark Daniels, general superintendent of ACCO's sheet metal department (the largest employer of sheet metal workers on the U.S. west coast, at 625 people alone in southern California),

says, “The partnership with 105 has resulted in the best apprenticeship programs available. Local 105’s president Luther Medina has launched an expanded curriculum of training for both apprentices and journeypersons.”

It’s not surprising, then, that ACCO has a reputation for handling the most complex of projects. Daniels ranks the \$5-billion Inglewood Stadium (AKA the ‘SoFi Stadium’) as one of the most challenging in recent years. This is why ACCO was selected as the main mechanical engineering subcontractor by Century City-based AECOM’s Hunt Construction unit and New York-based Turner Construction Co.

The massive stadium seats 70,240 spectators and, due to it being under the flight path into Los Angeles International Airport, was required to be constructed two-thirds below grade. “In the moat-like perimeter around the facility we had to install 46 different air handlers and lots of split systems for individual suites,” Daniels says. “Almost all of the systems we worked on were tied into a fire/life safety system, and virtually every duct, regardless of size, had to be seismically restrained.”

Altogether, the project required 2.1 million pounds of ductwork. At peak 120 sheet metal workers were on site, and over 250,000 man-hours were spent on the project in total.

For the \$1-billion mixed-use Metropolis project, ACCO’s use of ductless VRF/VRF fan coils in the hotel rooms, concealed VRF/VRF heat pump in the ceiling of the public spaces, and condensing units located on the high roof were some of the elements of an engineering redesign that resulted in savings

“We’re working on several new theme park rides where the challenge is to make the ductwork invisible. We love challenges.”

—Mark Daniels, ACCO

to the owners of about five percent less than the total value of the original proposal.

As for the 75-storey Wilshire Grand in downtown L.A., ACCO’s design-assist role evolved into a design-build partner alongside Turner, ACM, and other specialty trades. The project included a 3000-ton central chilled water plant, a 6000 Ton-Hr TES tank, and a 14,000 MBH central heating plant. Chilled and hot water piping was distributed to 1100 fan coils and 950,000 CFM of air handlers.

“Right now we’re working on several new theme park rides where the challenge is to make the ductwork invisible,” Daniels says. “We love challenges.”

As 2021 is shaping up to be a busy year of work and opportunity, ACCO plans to continue its path of organic growth and strategic acquisition and to fortify its project backlog. “As always we’re careful to be smart in all our initiatives and don’t grow just for the sake of growth,” Daniels says. “But our business prospects in 2021 are exciting, and with the continued support of Locals 105 and 104 and thier members, we will continue to evolve and build on our services.” ■



