

With an Eye on the Future

When I was a child — back in the days of cable dozers and backhoes — I had the privilege of having both a father and a grandfather who had their own contracting businesses. My days were spent going to work with one or the other of them. It was great fun to play around with “direct drive” tractors and dig holes with multiple levers when my feet couldn’t even reach the pedals. I’m sure it is those memories that fuel my interest in old equipment. I have joined several historical associations that promote the equipment of the past and I enjoy looking at magazines that show how the work used to be done. I actually remember the days of “batter boards” before the pipe laser came along.



But for all my interest in the past, I am firmly rooted in the present, with my eyes trained on the future. That’s one of the reasons I’m a member of the National Utility Contractors Association (NUCA). NUCA’s programs and professional resources have always been on the “cutting edge.” I know that’s an expression we hear a lot, but in this case it’s appropriate because it refers to the creations of the small number of people or groups who are at the frontier of progress in a field.

Take for example trenchless technology, which is the focus of this issue. While the trenchless industry was still in its infancy, NUCA was providing information on methods, materials and applications — and it has remained ahead of the curve ever since. For example, NUCA’s best-selling “Trenchless Construction and Rehabilitation Methods” manual, which is regularly updated by the Trenchless Technology Committee, is now in its fourth edition. For this latest update, the chapter on pipe ramming methods was revised and expanded, and six new chapters were added — pipe bursting, sliplining, cured-in-place pipelining (CIPP), fold and form pipelining, deformed/reformed HDPE pipelining and vacuum excavation. It’s clearly the go-to manual if you need to know the characteristics, equipment requirements, procedures, advantages and disadvantages of each trenchless installation method.

And, I don’t want to forget the Trenchless Assessment Guide (TAG), which is interactive software designed to help utility engineers and designers evaluate the various trenchless construction methods that can be employed in the installation, rehabilitation and replacement of buried utilities. Already an invaluable tool here in the United States, TAG recently won an award in Europe. And, I’m told that NUCA’s Safety Department has under development an HDD Safety Program designed specifically for the trenchless contractor.

I am not personally involved in the trenchless market, but many of NUCA’s members are, either with conventional horizontal boring or directional drilling. That kind of hands-on, field experience among the association’s diverse membership clearly shows itself in forward-thinking programs and research that are right on target because they are developed both by and for the people who need them to stay ahead of the competition and grow their businesses.

So, while my heart may be with the equipment of yesteryear, I can still appreciate the tremendous value of being a member of an association with its eye on the future.

Regards,

James King

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