

Montana Society of Engineers

A state society of the National Society of Professional Engineers



Founded 1887

President's Message: More Than Stray Thoughts

Tom Abel, PE, President

Kalispell Math Counts

It was freezing rain the day of the Kalispell Math Counts competition, but we only lost about 5 students due to weather. We had a good turnout at the Flathead Valley Community College facility. MathCounts state coordinator, Dan Munson, drove all the way from Billings for the day. He was complaining it was up hill both ways. On the last round of the competition, students had the little buzzers and are supposed to buzz when they have the answer. If none of the students gets it, the moderator asks if anyone in the audience knows the answer. There were a group of us engineers sitting at the back of the room. On several of these stumper questions, we raised our hand – We have it. We've got it covered back here. Hey look back here!!! We give our answer. BAAAAAH.....



Wrong answer. We did get a couple of them right thought. It is a pretty humbling experience. Many thanks to the dedication of Dan Munson for coming all the way from Billings up hill, and to Vickie Neil—Coordinator for the Kalispell Chapter of MathCounts. If you are not involved, it is a pretty good experience. One little girl did well and won several awards. When I shook her hand to give her the award, I told her I remembered her from last year (she won last year too). She said she remembered me too, then she just smiled. I think that was a good thing. One of the drawbacks of being self employed is sometimes your boss can be a real jerk. After spending the better part of the day at MathCounts, the boss made me get some work done and I had to work well past 9:00 PM, when Dan Munson was still climbing the hills back to Billings.

Somers Dock Update

The water is down almost 10 feet and there is ice around the Somers docks. I was at the yacht club the other day and decided to inspect the docks for damage to see how last

years repair job stood up. We had a welding firm weld caps onto all the pilings and install cross I beams to the caps making the piling pairs sort of a moment frame. The formerly bolted cross bracing was also welded in place. The inspection revealed no broken welds or failed members. There were a few bolts on dock fingers that had worked loose and some bolts holding the light poles from being sucked into the sky from a tornado. All of these could be easily fixed. There was no major damage observed. So far the repairs had held. (Knock on wood)

Walking on the ice was a pretty hairy experience. The dock extends out into the lake about 400 feet from shore. Only a stones throw away there is open water and there is 1" of water lapping around each dock piling. The pilings apparently conduct enough heat from the ground to keep the ice melted around the piling perimeter. I knew the water along the entire dock is no more than 13 feet deep and the water is down 10 feet. Subtract 8" of ice and I knew if I fell through I would only be up to my knees in frigid ice cold water, slowly sinking into the sawdust lake floor. Still your mind says you are 400 feet from shore the water has to be really deep here. With the next step the ice makes a huge cracking sound. I jumped to grab the nearest piling, as though that would help if the ice broke through. There is a 1/4" crack below my feet. I am thinking, even if the ice breaks around me, a slab of 8" ice should support my weight. I got off the ice quickly. Nothing bad happened.

Bending Nails

If a person wants to become an engineer, one has to enroll in college and take some very difficult math, science, and engineering courses to earn a degree in engineering. Presently there is consideration for a 5 year course. Upon graduation, one must be an apprentice engineer and work approximately 4

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