

SAFETY SHOOTER



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Swimming Pools... Then and Now!

In the late sixties when I started in the shotcrete industry, swimming pool construction was the main use for dry-mix shotcrete. Ah, yes, the good old “gunite” days. Those were the days when safety was strictly a result of good luck. There were no complaints

if you got hurt—you just got over it.

The day would start at 5:30 a.m. in the yard. I drove the gunite rig, which was old, had no trailer brakes, no tail lights, and was held together with tie wire. Shooting the first pool usually would start around 7:00 a.m. The homeowner would always stay home and serve us coffee and donuts no later than 10:00 a.m. We would finish the first pool by 10:30 a.m. or so. After stopping to buy cold beer, our crew headed for our second pool of the day. Again, the homeowner would always stay home on gunite day, waiting for our arrival. Around noon, the homeowner would ask if we would like something cool to drink and we would say beer would be fine, thank you. Believing they were being gracious hosts, homeowners served us beer on the job, which was the American way to work in the sixties. We would finish the second pool around 3:00 p.m.

Now it was time to head for the yard. That is when we started drinking beer on our own time. Back at the yard, we had a complete room devoted to beer drinking. A full supply of cold beer was always on hand. When it got dark we wanted a change of scenery and would head to a bar to let off a little steam. And so it was in the “gunite” industry in the sixties when I entered this industry.

Then came along the words “workers’ compensation.” It changed the way we “worked.” Some of the changes seemed so silly and childish.

- No more drinking beer while we were shooting shotcrete;
- No more drinking beer while driving company equipment;
- No more fist fights on company property;
- No coming to work with a hang-over;
- Mandatory use of personal protective equipment;
- Drug and alcohol screening;
- And on, and on, and on.

Even the quality of our work was under more inspection and criticism (like it was affected by an occasional beer or four while we were shooting the pool). Someone wanted to take the fun out of our jobs.

Fast forward to 2005. Today I am Chair of the ASA Safety Committee. The changes mentioned above have been widely

accepted as good business practice for many years now and not just for the swimming pool industry. We continue to look for methods and equipment to make our workplace safer and more efficient. Our association is seriously committed to making the shotcrete industry a model for other industries in the way we work both efficiently and safely.

To achieve excellent results in swimming pool construction is harder than it looks. Customers are more demanding than ever. There are so many options available to the customer, which require the shotcrete contractor to be more knowledgeable than ever while working more safely than ever. There can be no doubt that this a challenging balance but a balance that will produce satisfied customers, more productive employees, and an enhanced bottom line.

Here are a few safety reminders related to working in residential areas.

Traffic Control may be needed. Most pools are built in residential areas where small children play and car and school traffic occurs. Kids are naturally curious and not always cautious.



Access. Materials dumped on the site may prohibit the use of the sidewalk or street. Pedestrians need to be guided to maneuver around your work site safely. Keeping your site



cleaned up and providing paths around materials and equipment will limit the opportunity for those passing by to get injured on your job.

Protection from overspray and rebound is a concern. Most backyard buildings need to be protected from overspray and rebound, making access for the crew more difficult. But more importantly, workers must be protected from direct contact with cement-based products on their skin. While contact with cementitious materials does not have an effect on everyone, there are some people who develop severe burns when wet concrete or other cement-based materials come into contact with their skin. Be sure your crew is properly protected, and don't forget the eye protection.



Scaffolding. Most pool contractors use the wall mount shown in the photo below. It seems to work satisfactorily to a height of approximately 5 ft. Scaffolding should always be double-planked (not shown in photo).

Swimming pool construction is still a major market for shotcrete contractors. Today, more than ever, it is critical that shotcrete contractors know more about concrete performance and the influence of placement by the shotcrete method to perform the best job possible. Part of that drive to get maximum results is working safely and creating a culture of safety within your company.



- * 1. Use per manufacturer's instructions
- 2. Always use full plank
- 3. Safety rail needed over 5 ft