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Kalb's Capitol Connection

By David Kalb

When I get feedback from a column "Q&A" we all benefit from knowing, whether it's the exception or the rule. Truly, we are never too old to learn, or in some cases, too young to be licensed. Unfortunately, as another contractor teaches us, your livelihood can suffer if you allow a license to actually "die." Our last inquiry gives one contractor no reason to "protest" the answer…

Question: Regarding your response to the landscape contractor trying to license his 19-year-old son. You stated you had never seen someone so young get his or her license.

According to CSLB records, my original license was issued in June 1973 and my date of birth is in October 1954. Using new math, I believe that made me 19 years old when I got my contractors license. So now, you have heard of the CSLB granting a license to a 19-year-old. Made my old brain think a little when I read your column, and that's what makes this business enjoyable.

Answer: Thank you for the e-mail and for showing me why writing this column is so enjoyable. Just when I think I've seen it all…. I started my company in 1982; however, I have heard stories that the board was – shall I say – more accommodating to contractors back in the sixties and seventies. It appears they looked at the entirety of your background rather than just your age. Congratulations. It is quite an accomplishment to have been actively contracting for over 35 years.

Q: I have a question about a California contractor's license and was wondering if your company can assist me in this matter. I had a class "B" general contractors license that I let expire in 2002. We moved out of the state in 2001 and I just let the license go. Now I may be moving back to California and will need an active license again. I have read the information provided by CSLB and it states that any expired license over five years will require a new application and passing the required exams. Since I have been out of state and have had no business in California since the expiration, is

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Innovative Rubberized Warm Mix Asphalt Project Completed on I-5 in North State

Contractor Knife River Corp. recently completed a 9-mi freeway repaving job on Interstate 5 west of Chico utilizing warm mix asphalt, with excellent results, reports Russell Snyder, executive director of the West Sacramento-based California Asphalt Pavement Association.

"Warm mix" asphalt can be produced at lower temperatures than conventional asphalt and promises to dramatically reduce fuel consumption, as well as air pollution. Used for many years in Europe, Warm Mix Asphalt is gathering momentum in the U.S. The National Asphalt Pavement Association estimates that within five years, half of all asphalt produced in the U.S. will be of the warm-mix type.

According to Caltrans District 3 Material Engineer Joseph Peterson, the $5.4 million pilot project was on the southbound lanes of I-5 from the county line just north of Orland, with a total lane-miles length of 36 mi. The project called for removing the existing Open Grade Friction Course asphalt, and replacing it with 0.10' Rubberized Hot Mix Asphalt-O. The project tonnage was approximately 18,000, and the WMA technology used was MeadWestVaco Corp. "Evotherm," provided by Telfer Oil, at 5.0% of Bitumen by weight. Paving work wrapped up on May 21.

The Hot Mix Asphalt design was performed by Caltrans North Region Materials Branch, headquartered in Marysville. Peterson says the initial OGFC mix design was performed per the California Test Methods. Optimum Binder Content was 5.5% by dry weight of aggregate. The multiplier used was 1.3 and was determined in the lab by producing RHMA-O at 1.3 and 1.4 multiplier.

Peterson says each mixture was examined for aggregate coating and flushing. It was determined that the 1.3 multiplier produced a more uniform product. The production RHMA-O binder content was set at 7.2% by dwa.

WMA production started at 320 Fahrenheit, with approximately 200 tons placed. Then the production temperature was dropped to 300 F and ran the balance of the day (2,200 tons produced). Peterson says that for the next three days the production started at 300 F and at noon dropped the production temperature to 290 F for the balance of the day.

Day five of paving production started at 300 F at noon, and was dropped to 290 F and then at 1:30 p.m. dropped again to 285 F. Approximately 200 tons were placed at 285 F, and then production resumed at 290 F.

"The product at all temperatures placed easy, with breakdown temperatures ranging from spec 285 F all the way down to 250 and final from about 260 to 235," Peterson says in an e-mail report. "Chunking in the windrow or mat was really non-existent. Smoke-wise, there was very little, and as expected the lower the temperatures, the less smoke there was."

Knife River Quality Control Manager Tim Denlay says the I-5 job was his company's first major foray into WMA in California. Previously, the company produced and placed test sections using Akzo Nobel "Rediset" at its Chico Plant, and the roadway has held up well under heavy truck traffic.

Denlay says the I-5 job was missing one element that evaluators were looking for: the impact on the mix of a long haul. In the case of the I-5 job, the Knife River plant was within the project limits. Denlay hopes to be able to do another project this year with a two-hour haul distance to gauge how the asphalt performs under those conditions.

A photo of the paving operation supplied by Caltrans shows steam rising off the newly resurfaced roadway, rather than smoke.

The mix as it was placed on the jobsite in windrows seemed "alive," Denlay says, there was no chunking or other problems associated with placement. Smoke at lower temperatures was greatly reduced. Denlay said.

An added environmental benefit to the project was that the "rubberized" asphalt utilized recycled rubber. According to Denlay, the binder design shows 81.5% PG64-16, which includes extender oil, and 18.5% total CRM, of which 75% is scrap tire and 25% is high natural. Denlay says Knife River ran 7.2% by dry weight of aggregate rubberized asphalt on most of the project. That works out to about 1,200 tons of rubberized asphalt, of which about 14% is scrap tires. The bottom line is about 168 tons of scrap tires were used to resurface the roadway rather than ending up in a landfill.

Cathrina Barros, a senior transportation engineer with the Caltrans Office of Flexible Pavements, says the department will be evaluating the performance of the warm mix asphalt pavement sections versus the control sections over the next two years.

"It's going to be more of a visual assessment more than anything," she says. "Everything will be evaluated in comparison to the control sections. If it all behaves the same, that's a good thing."

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