

The CAO Weekly Report

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Monterey County Administrative Office

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- Contracts/Purchasing earns national award for academy
- Annual training event a backbone of safety for Ag Industry



Contracts and Purchasing Academy Earns National Achievement Award

Each year, the National Association of Counties (NACo) recognizes and honors programs that embrace innovative techniques and effective methods which both serve constituents and strengthens the way staff delivers services to or on behalf of local residents.

This year, the Contracts and Purchasing Academy, developed by the Contracts and Purchasing Division of the CAO's Office, has been selected for one of NACo's Achievement Awards.

"We are very proud of the acknowledgement and the award which shows what the Academy concept has been able to accomplish," explains Contracts and Purchasing Officer Mike Derr. "There are tremendous internal benefits of having a more seasoned and knowledgeable team of contract and procurement professionals performing the procurement functions in an effective and instrumental fashion. It is a benefit to the community we serve that those managing the County's purchasing and contract practices have the best training."

The Contracts and Purchasing Academy concept was born from the desire by county management to improve the overall contract and purchasing process. The first trainings began in September 2014 and to date, 157 employees have completed the course. The week-long program takes place in both classroom and online settings and provides a thorough training in contract creation and management, from procurement practices to RFPs to working with vendors.



Contracts and Purchasing Supervisor Mike Derr leads one of the academy classes.

What do participants say about the Contracts and Purchasing Academy?

- *Although a very intense program and time consuming well worth it*
- *Before I didn't feel that there was any real standardization for what the county was looking for when processing procurement documents. I feel I have standards and guidelines now that will assist me in the process*
- *The open discussions and team building approach along with the brainstorming issues & resolution was great*
- *Extremely informative, being new to the county and contracts, the knowledge was invaluable*
- *This class was not only informative it was fun, great instructors, no wasted time, taught the key elements - overall great experience*

The program has great support among departments, since besides being a major employer in the area, the County is also a major purchaser of goods and services needed to conduct business. Contracts are the conduit for receiving those goods and services, but often have complex components and legal requirements.

NACo Achievement Awards are given in 21 categories which reflect the vast services counties provide. Applications for awards are judged on their own merits, not against competitors. Details and an abstract about the Contracts and Purchasing Academy were submitted in the "Personnel Management, Employee Training and Employee Benefits" category.

If you have not yet taken advantage of Academy training, visit the Learning and Organizational Development's training calendar on the [Growing Our Own website](#). All Academy sessions are held in the Learning and Organizational Development Training and Development Center, located at 230 Church Street, Building 1 in Salinas.



County Collaboration Keeps Ag Safety at the Forefront

The Salinas Valley Ammonia Safety Day is an institution when it comes to training and safety in the field of agriculture refrigeration. This educational event, which is a collaboration between industry, government and academia, celebrated its 22nd year of providing safety training to industry, emergency responders and regulators.



Rick Williams, a retired captain from the Salina Fire Department, moderated the event. Among the speakers, Dr. Zahi Atallah, Dean of Advanced Technology at Hartnell College, told attendees that one of the missions of the College is to prepare skilled professionals for the California agricultural industry.

The event was developed to increase company and public awareness about the importance of preparing for chemical emergencies and to encourage companies and their employees to take action. Thanks to continuous training provided by the event and the attention it has focused on this issue, the number of chemical emergency incidents at local refrigeration sites has reduced dramatically over the years.

The conference drew a huge crowd, approximately 500, and was held at a new location this year, the Salinas Sports Complex. The theme was “Managing Safety and Productivity – Staying Ahead of the Curve.”

The Environmental Health Bureau of the Health Department plays an important role in this training event.

“By far the biggest single safety factor around ammonia units is well-trained users - the safest people are the best trained,” said Bruce Welden, the supervisor of Hazardous Materials Management Services in the Environmental Health Bureau of the Monterey County Health Department. “Hartnell College is on the threshold of creating training courses in refrigeration, and are raising awareness of the vocational trades with their good-paying jobs.”

The event was another great success and marked a new milestone in the continuing partnership with Hartnell College.

At the conference, Hartnell officials laid out the importance of having highly trained workers inside processing plants who can maintain ammonia tanks and react skillfully in the event of an ammonia leak.

Produce processors up and down the Salinas Valley are applauding the direction Hartnell College is heading toward implementing an accredited technician program to train students on maintenance, installation and, most importantly, on safety of ammonia refrigeration systems.



One of the workshops at the Ammonia Safety Day event is a hands-on training session on the operation and maintenance of pressure relief valves (above). This is a critical aspect of refrigeration systems which play an important role in the county's fresh produce industry.

