

# ARCHITECTURAL precaster



## APA CONVENTION PHOTO GALLERY INSIDE

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Architectural Precast Association  
325 John Knox Rd., L-103  
Tallahassee, FL 32303  
Phone: (850) 205-5637  
www.archprecast.org

# ARCHITECTURAL precaster

FOURTH QUARTER 2024



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Jesse Thompson, Northern Design*

I am filled with pride and gratitude for the incredible energy and commitment brought to 2024 APA Annual Convention in Park City. From the engaging interactions in the workshops and plant tours, to the camaraderie after hours, to the over \$5,000 raised for charity at the JBT Championship Golf Tournament, the entire event was outstanding. The convention was a testament to the strength of our community and our commitment to making each other better precasters.

Special thanks to our sponsors, whose support helped make the event possible. I am also very thankful for the active participation of the many producers at the event.

Looking ahead, I invite all of you to join us at the Northern Design plant for our 2025 Spring Workshop

in the charming seaside town of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Portsmouth has a rich history and stunning coastal views. The educational content and fun activities we are planning will make for another unforgettable experience. Please mark May 1-4 on your calendar and look for more information soon on the APA website.



Jesse

## APA 2025 SPRING WORKSHOP

May 1-4

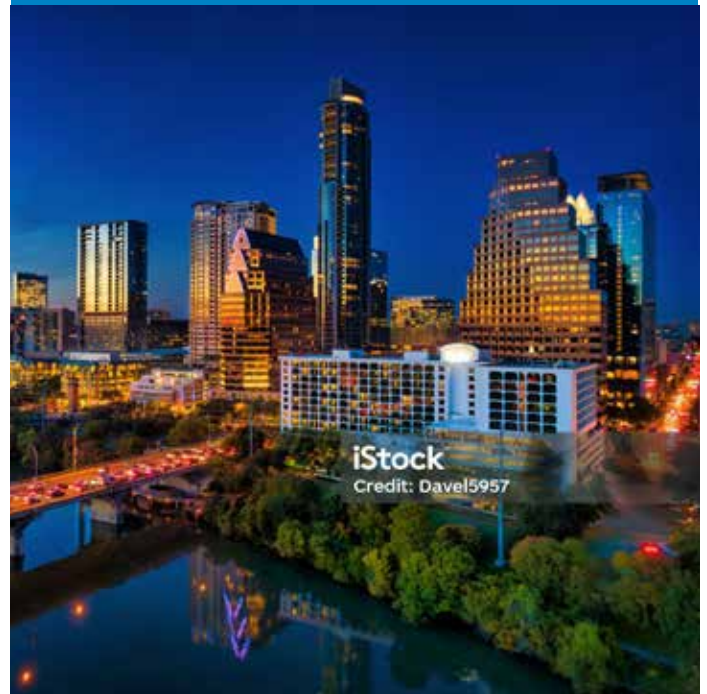
Portsmouth, New Hampshire



## APA 2025 ANNUAL CONVENTION

September 25-29

Austin, TX







# 2024 APA ANNUAL CONVENTION

October 25–28, 2024

Grand Summit Hotel – Park City, Utah

## APA Annual Convention Wrap-up

The 2024 APA Annual Convention was a dynamic event filled with education, networking, and celebration. The event kicked off with an opening dinner and bourbon tasting from High West Distillery. Through the convention attendees participated in leadership training and interactive case studies, gaining valuable insights into best practices and industry trends in precast. The producer roundtable fostered rich discussions and plant tours offered a hands-on look at the production processes and equipment used by other plants.

Highlights included the JBT Championship Golf Tournament, which combined camaraderie and fundraising, and the Awards for Excellence Dinner, celebrating outstanding achievements in the industry. Networking events and sponsor presentations added further value, making this convention one for the memory books.







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Grand Summit Hotel – Park City, Utah







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# APA CERTIFIED PLANT



## PLANT SMARTS – DID YOU KNOW?

One of the most common violations found during APA plant inspections is lack of certified personnel.

### **WHO NEEDS TO BE CERTIFIED?**

The APA requires at least one APA Certified Batch Plant Operator (BPO), QC Level I (QCI) personnel and QC Level II (QCII) personnel. In addition, plants must have an ACI Concrete Field Testing Technician and an ACI Concrete Strength Testing Technician (if breaking cylinders).

### **WHY DON'T PLANTS HAVE THE APPROPRIATE CERTIFICATIONS?**

Plants found in violation typically don't have personnel with the appropriate certifications for a variety of reasons, but the two most common are:

While the minimum requirement is that a plant only have one person who holds each of these certifications, that often isn't enough. Life happens: people move on to other jobs, get sick, etc., and when that happens one of your keys to quality control goes missing.

Some plants don't carefully track the expiration date of their employees' certifications. Tracking these expiration dates are even more important for those plants who only have one person certified.

### **HOW CAN A PLANT MINIMIZE ITS EXPOSURE IN THIS AREA?**

The easiest way to remedy these two common causes is simple, have more than one person hold each certification. While these certifications come at a cost, plant leadership would be wise to think of these certifications as an investment in not only quality but the successful and continued operation of their plant. Also, plants should have, as an addendum to their QC manual, a list of all certified personnel and the expiration dates for their various certifications. A quick review of this list every six months during your bi-annual inspections will help ensure that plant leadership is keeping a close eye on the expiration dates of the certifications held by their staff.





## Enforcement Begins on Pregnant Workers Fairness Act

Pregnant workers are vulnerable and have endured decades of discrimination in the workplace, often facing unfair treatment and lack of accommodations. In response, a new federal law, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), has been enacted to ensure pregnant employees receive the protections they deserve. This law requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations, safeguarding the rights and well-being of pregnant workers, and marking a significant step toward creating a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

Employers must familiarize themselves with the PWFA and ensure compliance to avoid potential fines or lawsuits from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The challenge many employers face is that the Act was passed quietly as part of a larger bill, leaving many unaware of its requirements. Failing to update policies and train staff on the new accommodations for pregnant workers can lead to legal consequences and harm a business' reputation, regardless of whether the employer was aware of the law.

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Many employers have yet to update their policies and employee handbooks to incorporate the new accommodation requirements outlined in the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. It is crucial for businesses to do so quickly, as the EEOC is beginning to receive complaints and actively pursue enforcement actions against non-compliant employers.

### Enforcement

Starting June 27, 2023, the EEOC began accepting charges for PWFA violations. Workers affected by pregnancy, childbirth, or related conditions may also be eligible for accommodations under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act or the ADA, so the EEOC will continue to handle accommodation claims under these laws alongside the PWFA.

In September, 2024, the EEOC issued notice that it has sued two employers under the PWFA, alleging that a manufacturer and medical practice failed to accommodate employee pregnancies and disabilities as required under the PWFA. Earlier in the month, the agency released notice about a pest control company that has agreed to enter into a conciliation agreement with the EEOC to pay damages and update its policy because it allegedly fired an employee after she requested a reasonable accommodation to attend monthly medical appointments for her pregnancy.

## What is the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act?

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, which went into effect on June 27, 2023, protects employees and applicants with physical or mental conditions related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions.

The law mandates that covered employers provide “reasonable accommodations” to qualified employees or job applicants with known limitations due to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, unless doing so would cause the employer “undue hardship.”

The PWFA focuses solely on accommodations, while other laws enforced by the EEOC prohibit firing or discrimination against employees or applicants because of pregnancy or related conditions. Additionally, the PWFA does not override any federal, state, or local laws that offer greater protections for workers impacted by pregnancy or childbirth. Currently, over 30 states and cities have laws requiring accommodations for pregnant workers.

A summary of the regulation is available [here](#).

## Who are “Covered Employers” in the PWFA?

The PWFA applies to private employers and public sector employers, including state and local governments, with 15 or more employees. It also covers Congress, federal agencies, employment agencies, and labor organizations.

## What are “Reasonable Accommodations” in the PWFA?

Under the PWFA, reasonable accommodations involve adjustments to the workplace or modifications to usual work practices to assist employees with pregnancy-related limitations. Examples of reasonable accommodations include:

- Schedule changes such as later start or shorter shifts
- Additional, longer, or more flexible breaks
- Workstation changes such as providing a stool to sit on
- Changing a uniform or dress code or providing safety equipment that fits
- Allowing the pregnant worker to work remotely, if possible
- Temporarily transferring employees to different departments or roles, as needed
- Assigning tasks that are less physically demanding
- Providing reserved parking near the entrance
- Providing a private space to pump milk, regular breaks to pump, or modifications to equipment or uniforms
- Providing leave for health care appointments or to recover from childbirth

An employer cannot refuse an accommodation request without good reason or have an inflexible policy that doesn’t allow for exceptions.

*This article was reprinted with permission from the Seay Management Human Resources Blog. Keep up to date on human resources trends and developments at: <https://seayhr.com/news/>*





## You're Exactly Where You're Supposed To Be, But Not Where You Have To Be

*By Mack Story*

There's a story about a tourist who paused for a rest in a small town in the mountains. He went over to an old man sitting on a bench in front of the only store in town and inquired, "Friend, can you tell me something this town is noted for?"

"Well," replied the old man, "I don't rightly know except it's the starting point to the world. You can start here and go anywhere you want."

The same is true for you and me.

No matter where we are, we can start and go anywhere we want.

Will it always be easy? No.

Will it always be possible? Absolutely, IF we're willing to pay the price.

Obviously, very few people start at the top. But, we don't all have that in common with those lucky few. However, what we do have in common is this: If we want to move forward from wherever we are, we all must start.

*“Most people fail in the getting started.”  
~ Maureen Falcone*

I agree, some do “fail in the getting started,” but I think the bigger issue is failing to keep going once you have started.

You had to get started at some point to be where you are. It didn’t just happen. You didn’t end up there by accident.

Like it or not, you ended up there by choice.

Do you want to press the reset button and head in a new direction? You can IF you choose to. Need some help? In private? No one will know but you? It will only cost you a few bucks! What a deal! Click/Tap above and begin your journey.

If you want to move up in the company or move forward with your life in general but feel stuck wherever you are, I’ve got good news. You haven’t run out of choices. You’re simply not making the right choices.

Why? I have no idea. Only you can answer that question.

When you think of why you’re stuck, don’t make excuses. Excuses are like exits when you’re traveling along the highway to success.

Excuses don’t take you where you want to go, they take you someplace you don’t want to go.

An excuse is simply a choice not to do what you know you should do.

Wish you had a better life? Start living a better life. Don’t know how? The key is knowing the more influence you have the more options you will have. More options equals a better life. Click/Tap above and start climbing “The Ladder of Influence.”

I want to give you something to think about whether you’re stuck or not. If you’re not stuck, use it to help someone that is.

Most of the time people quit growing and going when the price gets too high.

Many people are not willing to part ways with the toxic people in their lives or sacrifice their time and/or their money to continue moving forward to the next level.

Growth usually requires a lot more time than money, so not having the money is just another excuse.

And most often, it’s not even about our time. It’s about our choices.



*Mack Story is the founder of Blue-Collar Leadership. For more information on his books, podcasts and more, go to: <https://bluecollarleaders.com>*



Welcome back, in this addition of the APA Precaster we are covering the difference between sacking/grouting versus refacing an architectural precast panel or section of a panel to fill air voids or improving the appearance.

## Differences Between Sacking/Grouting and Refacing An Architectural Precast Panel

By Kiley Marcoe, Metro Precast & Stone Services, Inc.

Grouting and individual filling are limited to filling air voids whereas refacing is a procedure used to improve the precast's appearance from casting defects or finishing errors.

Depending on the quantity and extent of the air holes, the holes can either be addressed individually by filling with a small trowel or as a general surface condition in which the entire concrete surface is rubbed (sacked/grouted). In either case, the shape of the holes does not need to be modified as preparation for repair. The surface is cleaned and dampened, and the holes are

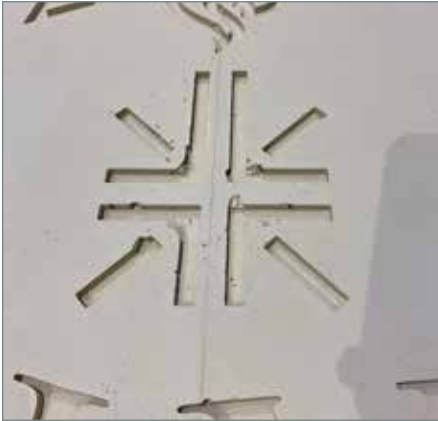
filled flush with prepared cement paste. If the air voids are too extensive for individual filling the panel needs to be grouted, the final surface treatment removes any slurry from the surface leaving the air voids filled and flush with the surface.

The first step is to develop a repair material through a series of samples following the re-surfacing techniques onto a sample panel or even a paver from the hardware store. Develop a repair color slightly lighter in color than the precast units, most repairs darken with time.

Failure to use a lighter repair color will result in dark repairs and undesired results. Due to the trowel or sponge placement, repairs will never be as dense as face down vibrated casts thus repairs are susceptible to absorbing more atmospheric pollution.



Individual filling of air voids requires no surface preparation or modification of the shape of the air void. Simply wet the area of repair, fill the air void using a square and trowel, and texture the repair using a hard cellulose sponge. As with all repair work, the repair and adjacent surface will need to be brush washed 2-3 days after installation to remove smears, efflorescence, and to expedite the color blending process.



Grouting or sacking is performed when there are too many air voids for individual placement. First, rub down any fins or high spots using a carbide rubbing stone. Repair any damage and air voids 3/4" or larger, take the time to texture the repairs using a hard cellulose sponge to match the panels finish. Apply a slurry using a sponge float to fill all the air voids. Once the repair slurry starts to change color remove all the repair material from the face of the panels leaving the air voids filled and flush with the surface, using a slightly dampened hard cellulose sponge. Never use a soft car wash type of sponge, using a soft sponge will remove repair material from the air voids leaving the repairs too low for an acceptable finish.





Refacing is performed to correct casting defects, correct color, cover repairs, and improve the overall appearance of a precast panel or section of a panel. If installed correctly refacing will last the life of the panel.

As with all repairs, preparation is the most important step. Unlike patching where mechanical anchors and topical bonding agents can be utilized to assist in bonding the repair material to the substrate, refacing depends solely on surface texture. It is very important to over texture the remedial area not only to assure a good physical bond of the repair material but to allow for a surface finish that matches the panel. Texturing can be performed through acid etching or abrasive blasting.





A successful precast repair is equal parts following procedures, experience, and artistic ability.

Until next time, Kiley Marcoe

Metro Precast & Stone Services, Inc. [Metroprecast.com](http://Metroprecast.com)

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question can turn into a complicated or costly concern if it's not handled properly.

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