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2025 ISSUE 187

**AWRF 2025 FALL
GENERAL MEETING Wrap**

AWRF EMERGING LEADERS



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2026 AWRF PRESIDENT

Celena Moses

Royal Van Beest
Houston, TX

As we begin 2026, I am truly honored to serve as your President alongside several new Board Members. Please join me in welcoming **Jeff Ashley (Ashley Sling)**, **Scott Postelwait (Industrial Splicing & Sling Co. LLC)**, **Mike Peters (Horizon Cable)**, and **Jeff Ferchen (The Caldwell Group, Inc.)** to the AWRF Board of Directors.

As we settle into our new roles and continue the great momentum established by past Presidents, the Board would like to remind every AWRF member that your valuable input and participation are what keep our success moving forward. Stay involved—reach out to your AWRF President, Board Members, Technical Committee Members, or the AWRF Office with any ideas on how we can continue improving both our industry and our organization.

We are excited to kick off our second year in **Houston, TX** for the **PIE and Technical Summit**. We're proud to announce that all booth spaces are sold out, and we're even making room to welcome potential new members. I encourage every company to bring additional staff members to take advantage of the keynote speakers and network with manufacturers and distributors across the industry.

The **AWRF Accreditation Program** continues to be an incredible benefit to our members, promoting **Performance and Quality Control, Safety Training, Regulatory Compliance, Company Credibility, and End User Recognition**. Built upon the AWRF Recommended Practices and Guidelines (RPGs), this program ensures your company maintains strong checks and balances.

This program's success is by large due to the many years of dedication from our Technical Committee Chairs, who have generously volunteered their time to make our industry safer and more informed. If you haven't already, I encourage you to reach out to the **Board of Directors** or **Technical Board** to learn more about the program and its many benefits.

Let's continue to work together to advance our industry — and, above all, **let's always put safety first!**

Lastly, I want to thank our departing Board Members **Debra Cushman (Cascade Rigging)** and **Hugh Yoder (Carpenter Rigging)** for all their years of service on the Board of Directors. Your personal time says a lot about your commitment to the industry and yourselves. Thank You!

Warm regards,

Celena Moses

President, Associated Wire Rope Fabricators (AWRF)

INSIDE

AWRF President	3
AWRF 2025 Fall General Meeting Wrap	4
AWRF 2024 Safety Award Winners	6
The Government Affairs Committee	10
Conference Speakers	12
Emerging Leaders	16
Golf & Pickleball Winners	20
AWRF NEW MEMBERS	23
In Memoriam	23
Retiring Legal Counsel Barry Epperson	27
BOD Spotlight Andrew Leblanc	31
SUNCOR® Stainless Pie Committee	33
You Are A Small Manufacturer Here's How To Use AI In 2026	37
Load Monitoring Systems	38
Blocks, Tackle & Other Fittings	41
Emerging Leaders	42
Emerging Leaders Mentorship Program	45
BOD Spotlight Mike Peters	47
OZ Lifting	48
Talurit Group	51
BOD Spotlight Scott Postelwait	53
Women In Manufacturing	54
Year To Year Injury Summary	57
WireCo	59
Bishop Lifting	60
Commercial Group Lifting Products	61
All Material Handling	63
BOD Spotlight Jeff Ashley	67
Scholarship Donors	69
Ad Index	70
Future Meetings	71

FUTURE MEETINGS

2026

April 20 – 23
Mon - Thurs
AWRF PIE and Technical Summit
Marriott Marquis
Houston, TX

October 18 – 21
Sun - Wed
AWRF General Meeting
Wailea Beach Resort,
Marriott Maui
Maui, HI



2027

April 5 – 8
Mon - Thurs
AWRF PIE and Technical Summit
Marriott Marquis
Houston, TX

October 18 – 21
Mon - Thurs
AWRF General Meeting
Omni Oklahoma City,
Oklahoma City, OK

2028

April 2 – 5
Mon - Thurs
AWRF PIE and Technical Summit
Omni Championsgate
Orlando, FL

AWRF 2025 FALL GENERAL MEETING WRAP

October 19 – October 22, 2025

Charlotte, NC

The Fall General Meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina, celebrated Bob Cushman, the new Hall of Honor Inductee, and honored retiring Barry Epperson, the AWRF legal counsel for 47 years. Delightful weather greeted attendees at the conference, held from October 19 – 22, 2025.

Highlights included visiting the nearby NASCAR Hall of Fame for the AWRF Gala and Annual Meeting. The venue featured the iconic Glory Road,

a 33-degree banked ramp showcasing historic race cars and the Hall of Honor, which enshrines NASCAR legends. The Emerging Leaders group hosted a reception, brunch and sponsored presentations on organizational leadership by Jimmy Blackmon.

Outgoing President Mike Poroo of SWOS expressed gratitude for his journey in the industry since 1998 and thanked the members who've taught him a great deal. Before coming to meetings, he didn't know what a balance sheet was. Poroo has spent about ten years, or one-quarter of his life, learning and growing through the association.

Before introducing AWRF 2026 President Celena Moses of Royal Van Beest, Poroo shared that he accompanied her on sales calls throughout Texas. Those stops included traveling to coal mines where Moses wore her steel-toed boots.

He praised her hard work on behalf of the association. Moses has served



on the Board of Directors since 2017 and the Technical Committee since 2015. Paul DeMattie, Kito Crosby, will take over as Vice President.

Moses thanked all her mentors who continue to help her. "I hope to be able to pay it forward to all of the new members coming into AWRF," she said.

She reflected that the industry has changed a lot since 1998, yet one thing has remained constant: the people. "It's dedication, craftsmanship and teamwork that make this field special," she said. "Every person from the shop floor to upper management plays a vital role in keeping our industry strong and safe."



Mike Poroo, Celena Moses and Jeff Gilbert

Honoring Members

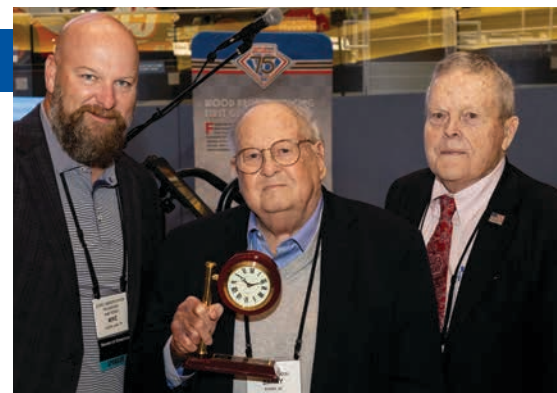
Bob Cushman of Cascade Rigging was named the 2025 Hall of Honor Inductee. He's the second recipient of this new annual award, which will be given to individuals who have made significant contributions to the rigging industry. Portions of a video were shown highlighting Cushman's work and dedication to the association. The AWRF Board of Directors selected Cushman for the award.

Poroo said, "Bob, you've inspired many people in this industry, and I hope you realize how important you are to all of us."

Cushman praised the association members. "You've got the best people in the world all in one room, and you've got to take advantage of it."

Barry Epperson, AWRF's legal counsel, was also praised for his 47 years of service to the association. Members offered their personal thanks in a video created to honor him.

Retiring board members were recognized. They are Debra Cushman, Cascade Rigging and Hugh Yoder, Carpenter Rigging Group.



Mike Poroo, Barry Epperson and Jeff Gilbert



Jeff Gilbert, Mike Poroo and Bob Cushman



Looking Ahead to the next PIE & Technical Summit

Chief Executive Jeff Gilbert said approximately 300 people attended the Annual Meeting. Many members commented on the success of the 2025 PIE & Technical Summit, held in Denver, Colorado. They look forward to the next event, scheduled for April 20-23 in Houston, Texas.

AWRF Technical Committee Outlines RP&G Updates for 2025 -2026

The AWRF Technical Committee continues to play a vital role in updating the Recommended Practices and Guidelines (RP&G) that support the safe and efficient operations of member companies.

Timothy Klein, P.E., AWRF Technical Committee Chair, reported that 2025 RP&G updates include:

- Revisions to the Recommended Guideline for Proof Test Procedures for Manual Lever- and Manual Overhead and Electric Hoists, is now named Recommended Practices and Guidelines: Manual Lever Hoists, Manual and Powered Overhead Hoists.
- Reaffirmation of Recommended Practices and Guidelines: The Operation of Sling Shops document with no significant changes.

Looking ahead to 2026, the committee plans significant revisions to the Swager Safety Guide, including removing the word “safety” to align with the naming conventions used in other documents, incorporating new press types and current OSHA regulations and retitling the document to Recommended

Practices & Guidelines: Swaging Machines. It’s expected that the revised publication will be available before the 2026 PIE & Technical Summit, scheduled for April 20–23, 2026, in Houston, Texas.

Additional new documents are under development for:

- Wire Rope Speltering Sockets
- Load Securement
- Wire Rope Splicing Fittings
- Crane Block Inspections

The committee is also evaluating a Spooling document for ropes to address emerging quality and safety concerns.

Rounding out the library of publications available to the membership:

Recommended Practices and Guidelines for:

- Proof Test Procedures for Chain Slings
- Proof Test Procedures for Wire Rope Slings
- Proof Test Procedures for Lifting Magnets Proof Test Procedures for Lifting Magnets
- Aluminum Turnback Wire Rope Terminations
- Test Bed Safety Guide.

Klein, of WireCo, emphasized the importance of collaboration with industry partners, such as the Web Sling & Tie Down Association (WSTDA) and the Cordage Institute to ensure members have access to the most current technical information. He encouraged members to contact him, Bob Cushman (Technical Vice Chair), or the AWRF office to share input or raise technical issues.

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AWRF 2024 SAFETY AWARD WINNERS



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Gold

Silver



Standard

Diamond Level

Cable Cisco
Cascade Rigging, Inc.
Chant Engineering Co.
Fulcrum Lifting / Kentuckiana Wire Rope
Mazzella Companies
Memphis Chain & Cable LLC.
Pacific Industrial Supply Co.
The Rigging Box, Inc.
John Sakash Co., Inc.

Platinum Level

Actek Manufacturing & Engineering
Esmet, Inc.
Handling Systems International
Metro Wire Rope Corporation
ProofCert, LLC.
Roberts Calibration, Inc.
SWOS
Royal Van Beest N.A.

Gold Level

American Rigging - San Diego, CA
Cable Moore
Hoisting Wire Rope & Sling
Holloway Houston
Slingmax Group
Kulkoni, Inc.

Silver Level

Alps Wire Rope
American Webbing & Fittings, Inc.
Amick Associates, Inc.
Cableco
Consolidated Rigging & Marine Supply
Fulcrum Lifting / Tri-State Wire Rope
Global Rigging and Synthetics, LLC.
Industrial Magnetics, Inc.
Liftgear International, Inc.
Rugged Controls LLC.

Standard Level

Acme Rigging & Supply Co.
Advantage Sales & Supply
Bishop Lifting
Carpenter Rigging
Carpenter Rigging - Bakersfield
DCL Mooring & Rigging
Eriez Magnetics
Fulcrum Lifting / Tri-State Wire Rope,
Dayton, OH
Fulcrum Lifting / Vernon Lifting
Hercules Crane & Lifting Supplies
Industrial Splicing & Sling Co.
Integricert LLC
Kito Crosby - Clackamas, OR
Kito Crosby - Corona, CA
Kito Crosby - Arlington, TX
Kito Crosby - South Holland, IL
LAMCO Slings & Rigging, Inc.
Lexco Cable
Marine Rigging, Inc.
Maskell Rigging
Mid-America Rigging
Mile High Rigging, Inc.
Paducah Rigging
Peak Trading Corp.
Peck & Hale LLC.
Royal Rigging
Total Tool Supply, Inc.
West Coast Wire Rope & Rigging, Inc.
Wiscolift, Inc.

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

(NOTE: THIS PROGRAM IS REPLACING CLMI CLIXSTREAM VIDEOS)



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The Government Affairs Committee

J. Barry Epperson
General Counsel and
Chairman of the
Government Affairs Committee
1980-2025



NEXT CHAPTER

As some of you are aware, I will be retiring at the end of 2025. My journey at AWRP began in 1978 in Tulsa, Oklahoma when the Association got together for one of its early conventions. Bob Moffett, recently retired from U.S. Steel, was the Chief Executive and David Bishop was President. They offered me the job of General Counsel and I accepted. During the next forty-seven years I have had the pleasure of working with three sets of Chief Executives including Don Sayenga and most recently, Jeff Gilbert and the JAGwire group. During this time, my wife, Brenda, accompanied me to the meetings, helping the staff with registration and spousal tours whenever needed. We have made many close AWRP friends over the years, some of whom are no longer with us. As the Association developed and expanded its athletic programs with golf, tennis and fun runs, I managed and supervised the tennis program.

As a popular trade association, AWRP has been an industry leader. Serving on the Technical Committee, my primary contribution has been the development of the procedure for adopting Recommended Practices & Guidelines (RP&Gs), of which there are now eight with others in the formative stages. Perhaps my most important project has been the creation and maintenance of a strong governmental affairs program. With eyes and ears in Washington, DC, we have been able to effect early detection of government initiatives which affect our members' businesses, either positively or negatively. Often we have participated in movements to promote or obstruct proposed legislation or regulations either as part of coalitions or by means of individual advocacy with members of Congress and government agencies. The benefits of the AWRP Government Affairs Committee have given the Association an advantage over many other industrial non-profit groups of comparable size.

In order to achieve our government relations objectives, we have developed and nurtured liaisons with other non-profits in the nation's capital, such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Tort Reform Association, the American Society of Association Executives, the Diplomatic and Consular Officers Retired, the Association of Former Intelligence Officers, the American Bar Association, the District of Columbia Bar Association and the U.S. Supreme Court Bar. It has also been our pleasure to work with like-minded members of Congress. Through these sources, we have been instrumental in major initiatives to pass a federal products liability bill (passed both chambers of Congress but was vetoed by President Clinton), stopping one size fits all

ergonomics legislation, rewriting the OSHA Sling Safety Manual and reversing OSHA's policy of requiring barrier guards at the point of operation on swaging machines. Major proposals which we have opposed include packing the U.S. Supreme Court and repeal of the Senate filibuster rule. More recently, we have dealt with the OSHA Walkaround Rule, the Department of Labor Independent Contractor Rule, the NLRB Joint Employer Rule, the Federal Trade Commission Non-compete Rule, the Overtime Rule, the 529 Plan Bill, the Government Seizure of Intellectual Property Rule, the OSHA Heat/Illness Rule, the U.S. Steel buyout transaction, Federal Estate Tax Legislation, the Defense Authorization Bill, the OSHA Reporting Rule, Tariffs and Customs, the NAIC Code and Healthcare Plans for Associations.

I see for AWRP a future of work in space along with traditional lifting, rigging and load securement jobs which defy gravity at or near ground level. The complications of many lifts require sophisticated problem-solving strategies, but none as sophisticated as moving or securing cargo in space where a complexity of gravity and inertia demand new applications of traditional physics. It is, of course, our emerging leaders who face these new and challenging phenomena just as our declining leaders face well-deserved retirements.

I have enjoyed my years at AWRP, working with many boards of directors and slates of officers and particularly with Jeff Gilbert and his team. We joined forces on numerous corporate governance projects which resulted in several by-law amendments over the years. Recently, we became involved in our joint project with LEEA. From its formative stages forward, my job involved contract advice and document preparation. The result has been beneficial to a number of our rigging shop members which have achieved special status with accreditation for LEEA inspection compliance.

I am just now coming to the sad realization that I won't be seeing most of my friends at AWRP again. I want to thank all of the members for allowing me to serve as your lawyer all these years. My sincere appreciation goes out to the Board of Directors for providing the gift of a biographical video rendition of my life as a memoir for my family. So, I'll say again, as I did to our assembly in Charlotte, farewell to you folks who have made AWRP what I believe to be the best trade association in the world.

History of AWRF Government Affairs Committee



J. Barry Epperson
General Counsel and Chairman of
the Government Affairs Committee

The Government Affairs Committee of Associated Wire Rope Fabricators began in 1978 when the Founding Fathers decided that the Association needed a presence in Washington, D.C. There were entirely too many regulations and laws pouring off Capitol Hill every week that affected the rigging industry either directly or indirectly. So there was an obvious need to monitor and sift through this data to determine where to allocate our resources in terms of support or obstruction. It was clear that we had to be both vigilant and proactive. I don't remember whether I volunteered for the job or was drafted, but it soon appeared to me to be a good fit. I had majored in political science in college and had some experience as a government lawyer, all of which was helpful in understanding, drafting and dissecting proposed regulations and legislation. I was anxious to begin promoting the AWRF brand in Washington and that is what we have been doing for the last forty-two years.



Left to right - Giovanni Coratolo US Chamber of Commerce, Rep Donald Manzullo (R-ILL), Howard Will - The Caldwell Group, Barry Epperson AWRF General Counsel, Jeff Gilbert Executive Director, AWRF

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS SHARE INSIGHTS ON AI, TRADE POLICY, AND INDUSTRY SAFETY

The Fall General Meeting also featured a dynamic lineup of speakers who addressed the evolving forces shaping the rigging and wire rope industry. From artificial intelligence and global trade policy to advancements in product safety and performance, presenters shared research, forecasts, and strategies designed to help members navigate change and strengthen operations. The following summaries highlight key takeaways from several of the technical and general sessions.

Busch Outlines Growth Opportunities for Wire Rope Industry

Economic futurist **Andrew Busch** of Charlotte, North Carolina, explored how artificial intelligence (AI) is already reshaping industries in his keynote, "AI Unleashed: Disrupting the Economy and Shaping the Future."

Busch said AI is a practical tool helping industries become faster, stronger, and more profitable. For the wire rope



and rigging sector, he pointed to opportunities in quality control, maintenance prediction, and operational efficiency.

He also reviewed how government policy and President Donald Trump's initiatives could boost industry demand. Executive Orders to strengthen the U.S. electric grid, expand mineral production, and revive the nuclear industry are expected to increase rigging and wire rope needs across construction, energy, and infrastructure.

Busch predicted demand could rise by 15 to 25 percent in sectors such as energy, mining, oil and gas, and construction. He concluded by urging a balanced approach to AI—encouraging innovation while maintaining thoughtful oversight.

U.S. Chamber Highlights Key Business Benefits in 2025 Tax Policy Update

Sarah Hoyt Corrigan, tax counsel for Tax Policy at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, encouraged conference attendees to take advantage of provisions in the One Big Beautiful Bill (OBBB) Act, approved on July 4, 2025.

The OBBB, she said, "supports investments, creates tax certainty for businesses, and it also helps with your workforce."

Corrigan reviewed key elements of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) of 2017, many of which were set to expire this year. The TCJA reduced the corporate tax rate to 20 percent and introduced a 20 percent qualified business income (QBI) deduction for small businesses. The 2025 OBB Act made these provisions permanent and enhanced several other tax benefits.



The U.S. Chamber, Corrigan explained, advocates for businesses of all sizes. "We really want stability in our tax code, and we want businesses to be able to rely on a pro-growth tax code to help businesses in the United States."

Attendees were encouraged to take the following steps to benefit from the current tax law:

- Confirm QBI deduction eligibility and amount.
- Identify and deduct all domestic research and experimental expenses, and review past years for refund opportunities.
- Maximize and plan for Section 179 expensing when purchasing new equipment or software.
- Review Qualified Small Business Stock eligibility when raising capital or investing.
- Assess and implement employer-provided child care benefits and claim enhanced credits.

Corrigan emphasized the importance of a permanent, stable tax code that allows businesses to make long-term plans. To get the most out of the OBB Act, she urged attendees to consult their tax advisors about how the new rules apply to their operations.

For more information, visit uschamber.com/taxes.

Simulations Show How Shackles Deform Beyond Proof Loads

Anton van der Zalm of the Royal Van Beest Group, based in the Netherlands, presented “Deformation of Shackles in Overload Situations” during the Oct. 20 session. Using simulations and real-world tests, he demonstrated how shackles behave under excessive loads and underscored the importance of understanding load limits.

Van der Zalm reviewed different shackle types—screw pin, safety bolt, and D shackles—tested under various loading conditions, including point, side, and two-leg sling applications. Simulations showed elastic performance up to proof loads,



with significant deformation beyond those limits. A 4.75-ton shackle achieved a breaking load of more than 35 tons, exceeding the 28.5-ton requirement, while a 300-ton shackle reached 1,500 tons, highlighting its robustness.

He also addressed material specifications, heat treatment, and practical applications, emphasizing strict adherence to working load limits. Van der Zalm, vice president of corporate research and development, noted that lifting without knowing the weight remains a common mistake and stressed the importance of education and training.

“Royal Van Beest wants to increase the level of safety in the industry,” he said.

Baisburd Urges Members to Monitor Changing Trade Landscape

Yohai Baisburd, an international trade expert, discussed the complexities of tariffs and trade policy under the second Donald Trump administration in his presentation, “Tariff Update as of October & Made in USA.”

Baisburd highlighted the continuing impact of Section 232 and Section 301 tariffs, as well as ongoing legal challenges to presidential authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). He



reviewed tariffs affecting steel, aluminum, autos, and pharmaceuticals, noting their broader effects on inflation and supply chains.

He also addressed the challenges surrounding “Made in the USA” claims, emphasizing the importance of accurate labeling and compliance with federal standards. Baisburd urged attendees to work directly with U.S. Customs to report potential misclassification or improper tariff avoidance by competitors.

He concluded by encouraging AWRF members to stay proactive, adaptable, and informed as trade and tariff policies continue to evolve.

Research Highlights Critical Role of Sheave Arrangement in Rope Safety

A 2019 accident in Asia involving a cable crane, where a hook block fell 100 meters without injury, prompted extensive investigation into the materials used in rope and sheave systems. The rope in the incident featured a plastic intermediate layer and was primarily paired with plastic sheaves.

Marco Elig, managing director of KV R&D Center GmbH, said the accident sparked new research in 2019 on the effects of sheave materials on rope performance. Tests using two 8x26 ropes found that steel sheaves significantly reduced rope life, decreasing lifespan by 18–22% for each steel sheave in use.



By contrast, plastic sheaves increased service life by a factor of 5.4 compared to steel sheaves, but without the visibility of the rope’s discard state. Researchers believe the distance and sequence between steel and plastic sheaves play a critical role in rope behavior.

The findings underscore the importance of strategic sheave placement in enhancing safety, extending rope life, and improving end-of-life detection. The study also suggests the need for updated standards and additional testing to confirm the results. Several AWRF members expressed interest in learning more and sharing the research within the industry.

Elig, who has extensive experience in wire rope engineering, continues to lead research initiatives focused on rope performance and safety.



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Emerging Leaders Group Promotes Next Generation of AWRF Leaders

The AWRF Emerging Leaders group brought fresh energy and focus to the Fall Annual Meeting. The group, made up of professionals under 40, participated in a reception and Brunch and Learn session during the event.

A highlight of the conference was the group's sponsorship of Jimmy Blackmon, a dynamic speaker recognized as one of the most combat-experienced leaders of the modern era. On October 21, he addressed the full membership with his presentation "*Business Optimization Leadership for the 21st Century*." The following day, he offered additional insights at the Emerging Leaders Brunch event.

Matt Marks, DCL Mooring & Rigging, Emerging Leaders Committee Co-Chair, first heard Blackmon speak at another venue and wanted to bring his expertise to AWRF. "Our goal is to help emerging leaders strengthen their careers—and to build a bridge to the next generation of industry talent," Marks said.

A key initiative is the Emerging Leaders Mentorship Program, which pairs experienced professionals (40 years and older) across the rigging and lifting industry with younger colleagues from other companies or departments. Mentors are encouraged to share guidance, perspective, and real-world insights to help mentees grow as future leaders.

Industry veterans interested in serving as mentors are invited to email nicole@awrf.org for more details. Mentees may contact Matt Marks (mmarks@dcl-usa.com) or Melissa Searle (melissa.searle@lacledegrou.com) for information on participation.

Looking ahead, the Emerging Leaders group plans to revive the "Future Leaders" initiative for local high school and college students at the 2026 PIE & Technical Summit. The program will include a presentation on innovation and career opportunities in the wire rope and rigging industry, guided exhibit tours, and networking opportunities with industry professionals.

By connecting current and future leaders, the Emerging Leaders group continues to foster professional development and strengthen the next generation of talent within AWRF.

Bring a Positive Attitude to Your Teams

At the Emerging Leaders Brunch, Blackmon emphasized the importance of leadership, vision, and strategy in organizational success. He encouraged the attendees to create a clear vision statement, measurable objectives, and a proactive approach to addressing disruptions such as tariffs.

When it comes to employees, he categorized them into four groups: willing and able, willing and unable, unwilling but able, and unwilling and unable, and suggested tailored approaches for each group. He encouraged attendees to work with

willing but unable employees, who may be loyal, yet need development to handle evolving tasks. They could also be reassigned to different projects.

He discussed situations where individuals may excel in one role—such as a salesperson or foreman—but not be well-suited for a management position that requires different skills. It's best not to promote someone who most likely will fail in a different role and negatively impact other employees.

Blackmon also promoted establishing a debrief culture after both successful and unsuccessful outcomes to enhance

project performance. The ground rules for debriefs include tackling issues, not people, and leading with vulnerability.

To lead effectively, he said leaders must maintain an optimistic outlook and bring a positive attitude to their teams.

He concluded by saying, "Treat everyone you meet as if they were going to be dead by midnight. Extend to them all the care, kindness and understanding you can muster, and do it without any thought of any reward. Your life will never be the same again."



Emerging Leaders L to R (Ryan Hoveskeland, Liz Shelton, Michelle Mathenia, Chase Vencl, Gabe Griffin)



Emerging Leaders - Opening Reception

Inspire Employees for Mutual Benefit

At the *Business Optimization Leadership* presentation, Blackmon challenged attendees to consider whether they were inspiring or compelling their employees. “Do you compel behavior or inspire behavior? There’s a difference,” he said.

Some people are more effective at motivating people to perform at their best every day, he noted. As the CEO of a 7,000-employee organization, he asked his workforce to meet the company’s standards, which often were updated as improvements were identified.

“Do you compel behavior or inspire behavior? There’s a difference”

He emphasized the reality of change in today’s world. “We’re resistant to it, but we live in a world of perpetual change, and the speed is the game changer.”

History is filled with businesses that didn’t adapt to change. Blackmon cited Nokia’s loss to Apple and Blockbuster’s bankruptcy as Netflix identified the value of streaming.

Blackmon noted that change can be difficult, but it can be done. “No one knows what’s coming next,” he said, describing the environment as “volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous”.

He shared a story of a howling hound dog sitting on a porch outside a gas station. When he asked about the unhappy dog, the clerk replied that the hound was carrying on because he was sitting on a nail.

“Why doesn’t he move?” Blackmon asked.

“Because he don’t hurt enough,” the clerk responded.

Unlike the uncomfortable hound dog, leaders need to take action to move their organizations forward—even when the process is challenging.

Blackmon encouraged attendees to develop clearly defined objectives with measurable results that would help them move from where they are to where they need to be. As a leader, he said it’s your job to teach, coach, and mentor individuals to become better.

He urged leaders to allow employees to make decisions, knowing that honest mistakes will be accepted, while reckless or repeated ones will not.

To promote success, create a culture where employees feel valued and engaged. In return, they’ll be loyal to you.

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Jimmy Blackmon - *Leadership for the 21st Century*

Blackmon Shares Battle-Tested Leadership Lessons

In his presentations, Blackmon, the founder of JFB Leadership, Clarksville, TN, emphasized the importance of adapting to change and inspiring human behavior.

Throughout his presentations, Blackmon highlighted his military background to illustrate effective leadership in complex, rapidly changing environments. He has led high-risk missions worldwide.

Blackmon emphasized the need for organizations to be agile, empower their teams, and trust in their competence.



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AWRF 2025 Fall Golf Winners



Golf & Pickleball Winners Announced

It was a beautiful day for pickleball and golf at the 2025 Annual Meeting in Charlotte. Participants returned to the evening reception with smiles and stories to tell.

The always popular golf tournament drew 88 players on 22 teams. The list of golf winners is as follows:

- Closest to the pin, women: Geraldine Brown (Uniroke)
- Closest to the pin, men: Bruce Yoder (Carpenter Rigging Group)
- Long Drive, women: Hannah Yoder (Carpenter Rigging Group)
- Long Drive, men: Jeff Ashley (Ashley Sling)

Team 1

Justin Brown (Uniroke)
 Geraldine Brown (Uniroke),
 Dan Perkins (Ribbon Webbing)
 Bill Higginbotham
 (Royal Van Beest)

Team 2

Chris Sutera (Landmann)
 Luke Staten (William Hackett)
 Phil Chant (Chant Engineering)
 Buck Handley (Ashley Sling)

Team 3

Keith Shepherd (DCL)
 Arne Niemann (Sahm)
 Patrick Clark (Pewag)
 Jim Small (Kito Harrington)

AWRF 2025 Fall Pickleball Winners



Intermediate

Jeff Doerge,
Donnie Bordelon, and
Cheryl Ross



Beginners

Steve Pope and
Gabe Griffin



There were 20 players testing their skills at Pickleball Charlotte. Winners are as follows:

- Intermediate: Jeff Doerge, Donnie Bordelon, and Cheryl Ross
- Beginners: Steve Pope and Gabe Griffin



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Jamie Goddard

Rope Guru Rewind - Honoring a Legend

With heavy hearts, everyone at R&W and The Rope Guru extends our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Jamie Goddard. Jamie was a one-of-a-kind leader in the synthetic rope industry and the founder of The Rope Guru. His vision, innovation, and deep expertise were instrumental in building the foundation that we at R&W Rope and Rigging are fortunate to carry forward today.

We are blessed to have worked with, and learned from, Jamie and are honored to continue forward the work he started. His legacy lives on in every rope fabricated, every solution delivered, and every partnership strengthened. We will constantly strive to uphold and build upon what he created, knowing he is looking on with pride at the growth of the company he founded.

Jamie will be deeply missed, but his impact will be carried forward for years to come.





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A FEW WORDS FROM JAGwire

As 2025 comes to a close, we just want to express our deep gratitude to this association, its members, the Technical Committee and the Board of Directors. It takes a great effort to keep this association running, and it takes a tremendous effort by many to make this association a leader in our industry. We hope to continue this trajectory going forward for many years to come, showing continued success and ample growth.

The AWRF Office is profoundly grateful for the friendship and guidance of Barry Epperson, our attorney of 47 years who is retiring at the conclusion of 2025. We wish him nothing but the best in his endeavors as he ventures off to retirement. Well deserved.

Bob Cushman, the recipient of the 2025 Hall of Honor award. Where to begin? First, I want to thank you for your mentorship, guidance, and friendship throughout the years. Since joining

the JAGwire team and working with AWRF, you have always treated me like an equal and not just some kid who was always been running around the AWRF meetings and functions. Your willingness to teach and encouragement along the way has not gone unnoticed and I will forever be grateful. Again, another congratulations to such a deserving individual.

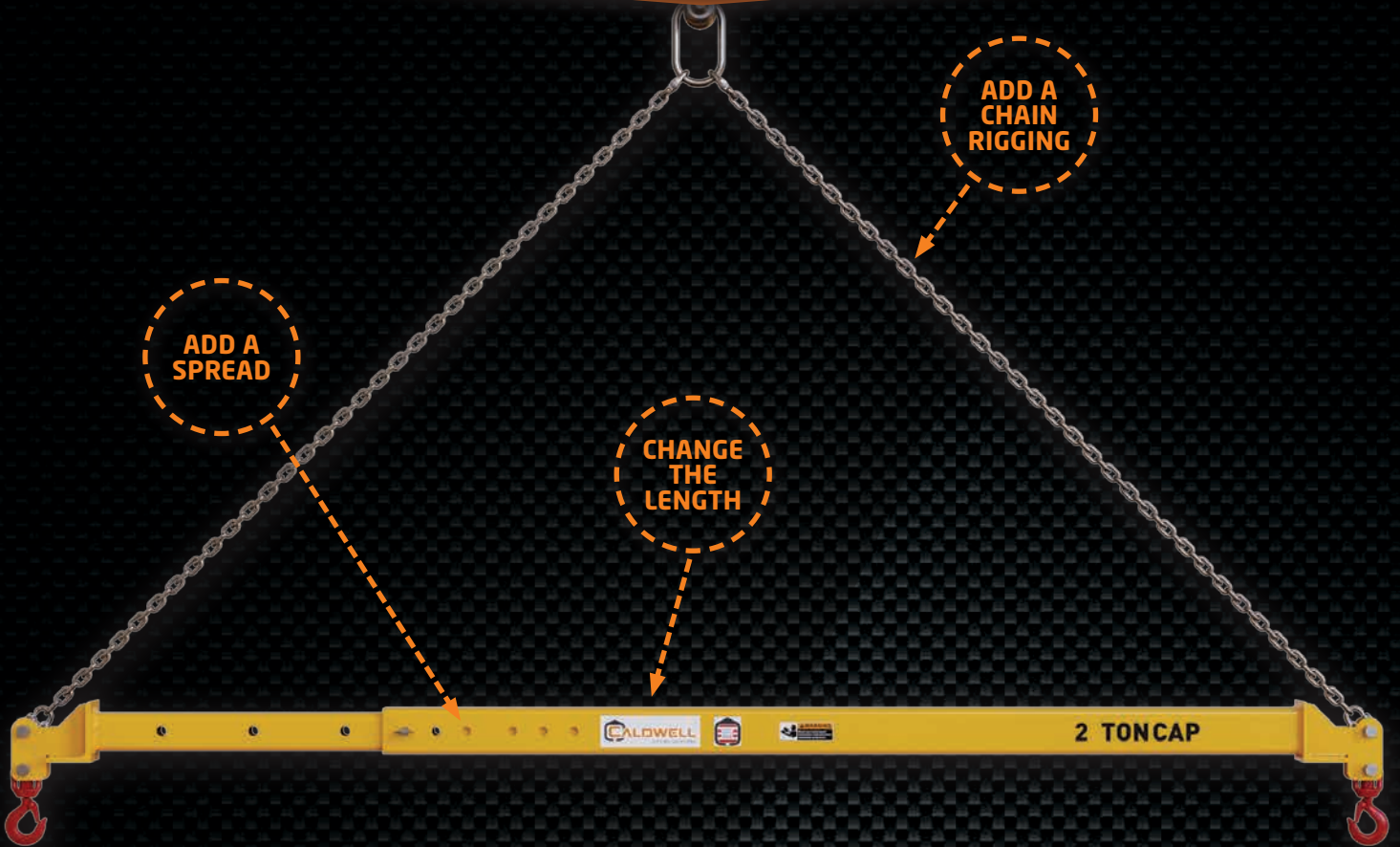
The team here at the AWRF Office hopes to continue to foster great relationships with the members who comprise such an important association. We look forward to serving you next year, to continue the great success and make 2026 even better. With the 50th Anniversary of the AWRF, that shouldn't be hard to do. Be sure to join us in Houston for the PIE and Technical Summit AND Maui, Hawaii where we will have our 50th Anniversary celebration!

Respectfully
Emily Wagner

*Wishing Everyone a
Great Holiday Season!*

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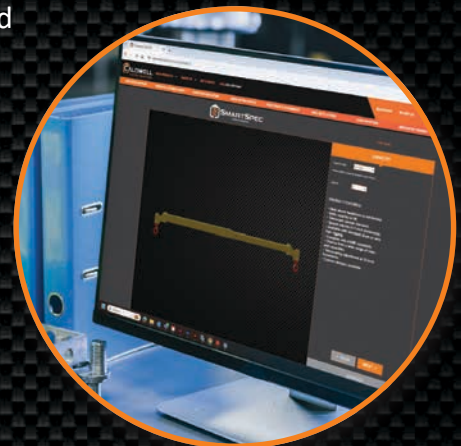
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AWRF Honors 47 - Year Legacy of Retiring Legal Counsel Barry Epperson

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A grateful conference crowd paid tribute to retiring AWRF legal counsel Barry Epperson in honor of his 47 years of dedicated service. He was recognized on Oct. 21, 2025, at the NASCAR Hall of Fame in Charlotte, North Carolina, during the AWRF Gala.

Members expressed appreciation to Epperson of Tulsa, Oklahoma, for his guidance and wisdom. He was committed to helping AWRF navigate challenges, protect members' interests, and strengthen the association's foundation.

During his 47 - year tenure, Epperson attended four meetings per year for a total of 180 board meetings. Initially, he was asked to serve as legal counsel by then President David Bishop and former Chief Executive Bob Moffett.

"My friendship with members is what I've enjoyed the most," Epperson said. Over the years, he worked with three Executive Directors, including Jeff Gilbert, the current AWRF Chief Executive. "They've been wonderful to work with and provided me with everything that I needed to be a better attorney for you," he added.

Besides Gilbert and Moffett, Epperson also worked with former Chief Executive Don Sayenga.

Epperson expressed gratitude for the support of his wife, Brenda, who often assisted with conference registration, as well as other family members and friends.

*J. Barry Epperson
retirement*



Gilbert praised Epperson's professionalism. "Barry knows his stuff," he said. "When there was a debate concerning AWRF business, Barry would offer proof to show the related facts."

Epperson, 87, began his tenure at AWRF in 1978 and has worked with member companies worldwide. "We've never been sued," he noted with pride.

He is particularly proud of starting the Government Affairs Committee and maintaining a strong relationship with the federal government. "Having eyes and ears in Washington, D.C., gave us a step up on a lot of associations of our size," he said.

At the ceremony, Epperson concluded his remarks by saying, "I don't want to say goodbye to all of you, because I hope to see some of you down the line. I think I'll just say so long to you guys and gals who have made AWRF into what I think is the best trade association in the world."

Emily Wagner, Jeff Gilbert, Barry Epperson and Mike Poroo – Group photo



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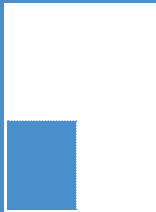
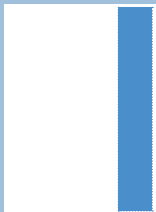
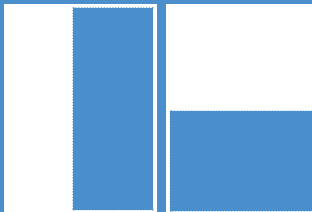
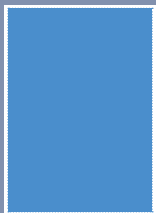
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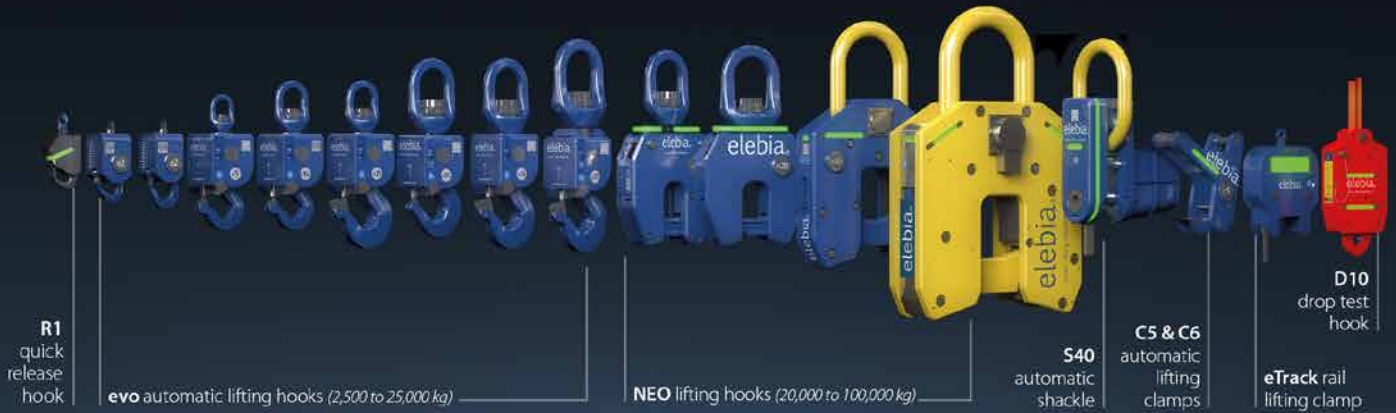
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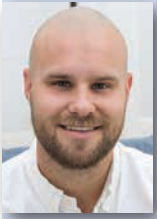
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AWRF BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPOTLIGHT

Andrew LeBlanc



What inspired you to join the board? When I first attended the AWRF conferences, I was invited to join the Emerging Leader's group. As I gained a deeper understanding of the industry, I felt compelled to join the Board of Directors. Now, as a new Board member, I aspire to continuously expand my knowledge, provide unwavering support to the board, and contribute to the industry's safe and responsible growth.

Is there a book, podcast, or leader that has inspired your approach to leadership? Podcast – The Catholic Gentlemen. Book – How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie

What excites you most about the mission of AWRF? I am thrilled to bring the board youth, knowledge, and passion to the table. I eagerly anticipate continuously encouraging the development of safety standards for manufacturing, fabrication, and distribution of lifting, rigging, and load securement devices. Additionally, I am

committed to promoting suggested safety programs and procedures that are relevant to the industry.

What do you hope to accomplish while in your current role? I hope to earn the trust of those who elected me to serve on the board. I aim to help the board and the industry comprehend the significance of rigging shops and the reliable, safe, and effective products we strive to produce.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work? When I'm not at work, I relish spending quality time with my wife and children. Additionally, I find great joy in being a devout Catholic and actively involved in my local Church Parish.

What advice would you give AWRF Members currently seeking more out of their membership? The advice I would give to current members who are looking to get more out of their memberships is to dive headfirst, not be afraid, and lead with your passion.

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SUNCOR® Stainless Announces The Promotion Of John Tavares To Regional Sales Manager – West/Canada

Plymouth, MA, November 11, 2025 – Suncor Stainless Inc., is the leading manufacturer for stainless steel hardware in the industrial, marine, government, architectural, OEM and commercial industries. Suncor Stainless is excited to announce that John Tavares has been promoted to the position of Regional Sales Manager – West/Canada. In his new role, he will oversee sales operations, strategy, and business development across the West/Canada, driving growth and strengthening customer relationships in this key region.



Tavares joined Suncor Stainless as the Senior Regional Account Manager - Southeast, where he quickly distinguished himself through his leadership, commitment to customer success, and a consistent record of exceeding sales targets. His deep understanding of the market and proven leadership makes him the ideal person to guide our Western Canada sales team. We are pleased to congratulate him on his well-deserved promotion.

“I’m honored to take on this new role and continue building on the strong foundation Suncor Stainless has established in Western Canada. I look forward to leading our talented sales team as we deepen relationships with customers and pursue new opportunities for growth.”

John Tavares, Regional Sales Manager – West/Canada

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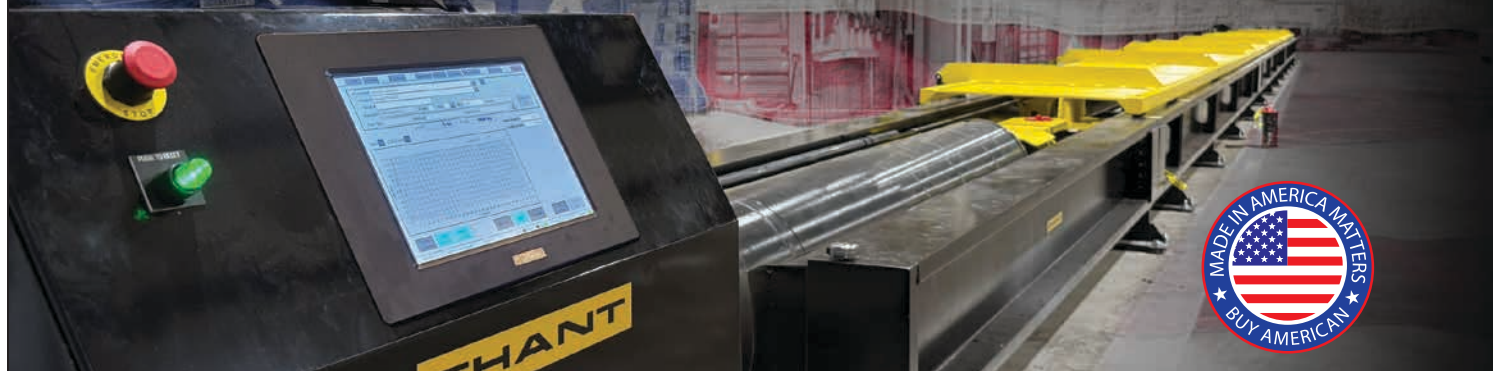
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Curt Jabben
Associated Wire Rope & Rigging
2025 PIE Committee Chair

Hurry, Hurry, Hurry!!!

Make your plans to attend the AWRF 2026 PIE and Technical Summit, coming to Houston in April 2026!

We're excited to welcome you to the AWRF 2026 PIE & Tech Summit, taking place **April 20–23** at the **Marriott Marquis Houston**. This tech summit continues to grow, and is becoming a cornerstone of the lifting, rigging, and load securement industry—bringing together professionals, innovators, and leaders for four days of learning, networking, and discovery.

Following the huge success of the 2025 Summit in Denver, the upcoming 2026 Summit will feature a packed agenda of technical presentations, hands-on workshops, and expert panels designed to deliver actionable insights and spark meaningful conversations. Whether you're attending to deepen your expertise or explore new technologies, you'll find plenty of opportunities to grow.

✳ **Explore the PIE (Product Information Exhibit)** One of the most anticipated highlights during the Tech Summit

is the **Product Information Exhibit**, where **over 100 suppliers** will showcase their latest products, services, and innovations. From cutting-edge gear to breakthrough solutions, this is your chance to engage directly with the companies shaping the future of our industry.

Houston's energy and hospitality make it the perfect setting for this event. Be sure to take time to enjoy the city's vibrant culture, world-class dining, and southern charm.

More importantly however, this conference is about connection. It's about strengthening relationships, sharing knowledge, and building the future—together.

Welcome to Houston!

Welcome to the future of our industry.

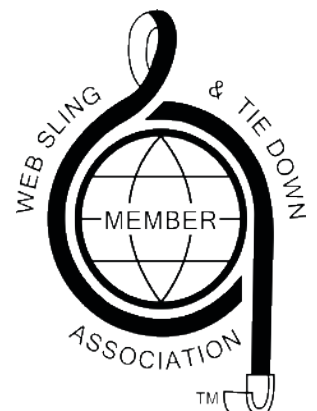
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YOU ARE A SMALL MANUFACTURER. HERE'S HOW TO USE AI IN 2026

By Gene Marks (This column originally appeared in Forbes)

You are a small manufacturer.

You're not Amazon and you're not Toyota. You don't have robots crawling over your facilities and you don't have hundreds of millions to spend on automation. You weren't born yesterday either. You know that, like all new tech, AI is still in its 1.0 version and you're not going to risk your business on immature and untested applications. And yet you can also see where things are going: AI will certainly have a dramatic impact on your business in the not too distant future, timeline unknown. So, for now, do you do nothing?

No, you can do something. You can start leveraging AI in your manufacturing business. Here are a few ways how.

Sign on to an AI Assistant.

This year it will be critical that you and your senior and mid-level managers subscribe to one or two of the main AI Assistant players – ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, Claude, Perplexity or Grok. There are many others, but these are the leaders. None are perfect, but then again who is? No document, agreement, bid, proposal, quote or other correspondence should leave your company without first being uploaded to your AI Assistant for comment and advice.

Train your people to use these tools to create new policies first before having them reviewed by your attorneys and experts. Connect these tools to your internal data – OneDrive, Google Drive, Dropbox, Teams, Gmail – so that you can search and get answers about your company's information. Use it for research. Converse with it about your business. Ask for advice. You will be smarter, get better answers and be more productive when you lean into a good AI Assistant.

Lean into Microsoft or Google's office tools.

Chances are your company runs on either Microsoft Office 365 or Google Workspace. Each has their own AI tool – Copilot (Office) and Gemini (Google). Hire a consultant from LinkedIn or a similar site and get your entire staff trained on these capabilities. They've come a long way. Use these AI tools to more quickly create presentations, transcribe and summarize online meetings, translate calls in different languages, write emails, analyze spreadsheets and manage data. Not only will your staff be

more productive, but they'll be less fearful of what this stuff does and be better at their jobs.

Build an internal solution for a manufacturer.

Thanks to a proliferation of tools available now you can build your own AI system using your own data. You can create your own large language model, and synchronize data from your ERP, accounting, inventory management, HR and CRM systems into it. You can create your own agents and perform automated tasks with minimal human involvement. I wrote about the steps you need to take for Forbes. It's not cheap. But it may be a good direction for your company.

Buy an external solution for a manufacturer.

Don't want to build something internally? You're not alone and you're not wrong. Doing that can be time consuming and expensive and probably out of your wheelhouse as a smaller company. Instead go to your manufacturing software providers that you use – Dynamics, Sage, Epicor, SAP, Acumatica, Infor, NetSuite or whatever. Have their product people walk you through all of the current and forthcoming AI functionality they're including in their products to justify their ongoing monthly fees they charge. Figure out what makes the most sense for your business, adopt, clean up your data, then train your people and implement. Do this in small bites.

Leverage your things.

It's the age of the Internet of Things and most of the best AI advancements are hidden in the form of sensors on manufacturing equipment. Major suppliers from Boeing to Caterpillar to Hitachi have multiple sensors using AI on their engines and equipment which are monitoring everything from humidity to output to potential safety issues. Your suppliers are likely doing this too and you need to ask and understand. This data can now be sent wirelessly to a large language model where AI-leveraged applications can analyze, interpret, remediate and notify.

Consider also augmented reality devices like HoloLens, VisonPro and Ray Ban Meta which can help do inventory, identify safety issues and train employees. Use small drones in your warehouse from companies Gather AI, Vimaan, Verity, B GARAGE and Brightpick to cycle count inventory and monitor production. All of these technologies exist and have significantly come down in price.



Gene Marks

Gene Is A Columnist & Author.

A past columnist for both The New York Times and The Washington Post, Gene now writes regularly for The Hill, The Philadelphia Inquirer, Forbes, Inc. Magazine, Entrepreneur Magazine and Fox Business.

Gene has written 5 books on business management, specifically geared towards small and medium sized companies. His most recent is *Want More Cash?: 100+ Ideas And Strategies For Increasing Your Company's Cash Flow This Year.*

A Professional Keynote Speaker.

Through his keynotes and breakout sessions, Gene helps business owners, executives and managers understand the political, economic and technological trends that will affect their companies and—most importantly—the actions they can take to continue to grow and profit.

Continued on page 64

Load Monitoring Systems Expands Global Calibration Network with High-Precision 55te Machines

pewag levo UK - the company behind Load Monitoring Systems is strengthening its international footprint with the rollout of new calibration service centres worldwide. The company now offers local calibration in the UK, Norway and the Netherlands, with a new Singapore centre launching in due course.

Each machine is supplied with a comprehensive user manual, and pewag levo UK offers on-site training to staff to ensure safe and effective use. This allows distributors to provide a fully certified calibration service to their own customers, giving end-users confidence that equipment can be calibrated to the same standard they would expect directly from pewag levo UK.

This global expansion reflects the company's commitment to ensuring safe, efficient, and reliable lifting operations worldwide.



Westcon Calibration Training

At the core of this expansion is the 55te Calibration Machine - a high-precision system for tension load cells that delivers fast, accurate results up to 55 tonnes. By installing machines across key global hubs, customers will cut transport costs, minimise downtime, and access reliable calibration services closer to their operations.

“Calibration isn’t just about compliance, it’s about giving customers confidence that their equipment will perform when it matters most,” said Richard Smart, General Manager at pewag levo UK. “By expanding our network, we’re making high-precision calibration faster, more accessible, and more cost-effective than ever before.”

With its advanced design, the 55te Calibration Machine empowers calibration providers to:

- Deliver exceptional accuracy at speed
- Reduce costs and delays associated with overseas shipping
- Become the go-to calibration partner in their region



Load Cell Calibration



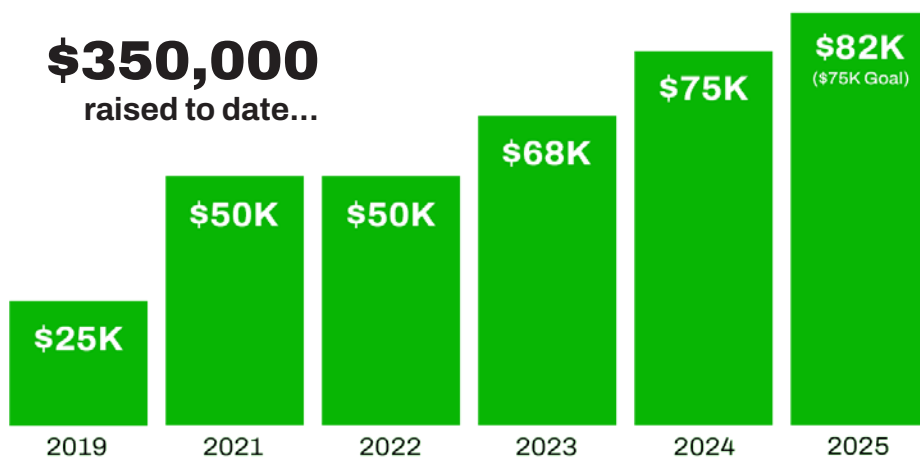
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The Kito Crosby *Lifting for the Troops* campaign raised \$82,000 for the Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation this year, enough to cover the cost of three full scholarships for US military children who have lost a parent in the line of duty.

Thank you to all sponsors and private donors for helping us surpass our goal and supporting this worthy cause. Together with our channel partners, industry partners, team members, and friends, we are honored to have raised a grand total of \$350,000 for Fallen Patriots over the past six campaigns.

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Understanding Cabling in Hoist Systems: Causes, Effects, and Practical Solutions

By Joost Eertman

Introduction

Cabling—when hoist ropes twist and tangle—remains from time to time a challenge in lifting operations. Twisting of rope shortens rope life, increase maintenance costs, and may cause costly downtime from cabling. While the phenomenon may seem simple, its root causes involve complex interactions between rope, sheave geometry, and block behavior. This article explains why cabling happens, explores the mechanics behind it, and shares practical ways to reduce its impact.

Why Does Cabling Occur?

When ropes run over sheaves during lifting or lowering, they rarely enter the groove perfectly straight. The angle at which the rope meets the sheave—called the **fleet angle**—creates a rolling effect that twists the rope. Over time, this twist can build up as stored torsional energy, depending operation type and consistency of that operation. When twist is released, it can cause the hook block to rotate, leading potentially to ultimate cabling and it's tangled ropes.

This process doesn't happen overnight. Each lifting cycle adds a small amount of twist, which accumulates along the rope length. Eventually, the stored energy becomes strong enough to overcome the block's stability, causing rotation and entanglement. In multi-fall systems, this effect is even more pronounced because multiple sheaves amplify the fleet angle influence.

Rope Construction and Torque

Wire ropes are built in a spiral (helix) shape so they can bend around sheaves. This design naturally creates torque when tensioned. Regular ropes exhibit significant torque because their strands all twist in the same direction. Rotation-resistant ropes reduce this effect by using layers wound in opposite directions, balancing out torque forces. Fiber ropes achieve similar results through braided construction.

However, even rotation-resistant ropes are not immune. Studies show that when ropes are subjected to bending and torsion simultaneously—such as when passing over inclined sheaves—their fatigue life can drop dramatically. One university study revealed up to a 70%+ reduction in CBOS (Cycle Bend Over Sheave) lifetime for a rotation-resistant rope twisted by just 180° over a 100d length. This highlights why managing twist could be critical for rope longevity.

Sheave Design Matters

Two factors strongly influence rope twist:

1. Throat Opening Angle:

The groove angle determines how the rope contacts the sheave. Narrow angles force the rope to roll more before settling in the groove, increasing twist. Wider

angles reduce rolling and handle fleet angles better. Research and standards suggest that angles **greater than 45°** are necessary to minimize induced rotation. Our laboratory tests indicated around **52°** offered the best performance at the test setup dictated fleet angle.

2. Material and Friction:

The coefficient of friction between rope and sheave affects whether the rope slides or rolls. Lower friction promotes sliding, which reduces twist. Materials like our -DryLube- iron, which naturally releases graphite, have shown excellent performance in reducing twist and wear compared to steel or polyamide.

Block Tilt and Twist Accumulation

Free-hanging multi-sheave hook blocks tilt, especially when empty. This tilt increases fleet angles and accelerates twist buildup in the rope.

As the block tilts, each rope pass over an inclined sheave adds twist. Over multiple lifting cycles, this stored torsional energy can cause the block to rotate gradually—leading to cabling. I.e. the extreme case where the block rotates more than 90°, creating the severe entanglement of ropes.

Looking Ahead

Cabling is complex, but understanding its causes helps operators make better choices in rope and hardware selection. At the **AWRF Technical Summit in Houston (April 2026)**, we'll share detailed test results on sheave geometry, material performance, and block design strategies. These insights aim to help the industry improve safety, extend rope life, and reduce downtime.





Melissa Searle
Laclede Chain
Emerging Leaders Committee Co-Chair



Matt Marks
DCL Mooring & Rigging
Emerging Leaders Committee Co-Chair

Leadership for the Next Generation: AWRF Emerging Leaders Bring Fresh Energy and Purpose to Charlotte

This October in Charlotte, the AWRF Emerging Leaders group, led by Matt Marks, leaned into something meaningful by creating space within our industry for the next generation to learn, connect, and grow as leaders. With support from the association and its members, we hosted keynote speaker Jimmy Blackmon, a retired Army Officer, bestselling author, and nationally recognized leadership coach, to deliver a powerful session on “Leadership for the 21st Century”.

Our goal was simple and purposeful, to inspire rising professionals in our industry to lead with courage, clarity, and resilience. To give them tools, language, and confidence to not just to manage tasks but to genuinely lead people.

Why This Matters for Our Industry

The wire rope and rigging industry continues to evolve. New challenges in workforce development, technology adoption, and organizational culture demand leaders who can adapt, think strategically, and motivate diverse teams. Yet leadership skills don't develop by accident. They are cultivated through exposure, mentorship, example, and practice.

That's where the Emerging Leaders initiative comes in. It's not just a committee or a networking group. It's an investment in the future of our companies and our industry.

By sending rising professionals to AWRF events, member companies are not only

giving their team members time away from the plant or office but they are giving them an opportunity to:

- Learn practical leadership tools from industry leading voices
- Build networks that support growth and collaboration
- Gain confidence in representing their organizations
- See a broader view of our industry and their role within it

Key Insights from Jimmy Blackmon

Jimmy brought a unique level of credibility and clarity to the conversation. Drawing from his military leadership experiences and years developing corporate leadership teams, he offered practical frameworks for leading effectively in today's fast changing environment. Some standout takeaways:

- 1. Clarity Drives Action** – Teams don't execute well when expectations are vague. Leaders must communicate the “why”, “what”, and “how” consistently and listen deeply to ensure alignment. “Your team can't follow what they don't understand.”
- 2. Culture is Built Every Day** – Culture isn't formed by slogans or posters. It is shaped by behaviors we repeat, the things we reward, tolerate, correct, and model. As Jimmy emphasized, “People will do what people see.”
- 3. Courageous Leadership Creates Trust** – Trust is grounded in consistency. Leaders build trust when they make decisions with integrity, even when it's uncomfortable, inconvenient, or unpopular. Courage in leadership is not dramatic; it's everyday follow through.
- 4. Resilience Is a Learnable Skill** – Resilience is not something people either have or don't. It's something that develops when individuals are supported, challenged, and encouraged to learn through experiences. This is where mentorship, peer groups, and leadership development matter most.

Leadership for the 21st Century





Why Members Should Continue and Support

AWRF is at its strongest when we invest in people, not just systems, buildings, or equipment. Sending your emerging leaders to future conferences and development sessions:

- **Strengthens the leadership pipeline within your company**
- **Increases retention by showing employees they are valued**
- **Ensures industry knowledge and culture is passed down effectively**
- **Builds a stronger, more capable, and more connected industry community**

The EL group is committed to creating more opportunities like this, but it works only with active participation and sponsorship from member organizations. If each company sends just one more rising professional next year, we will expand the talent, perspective, and innovation shaping our association.

Thank you to everyone who attended our event and thank you for the AWRF board in investing in our group.

We look forward to seeing everyone in Houston and appreciate the continued investment in the EL group. Leadership development is not an expense; it is a strategic asset.



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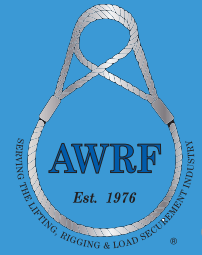
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AWRF EMERGING LEADERS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM



We're excited to announce the launch of the **AWRF Emerging Leaders Mentorship Program**: a new initiative designed to connect professionals across the rigging and lifting industry and help develop the next generation of leaders.

This program pairs young professionals with experienced industry veterans (40+) from different companies and departments. Together, mentors and mentees will share insight, grow their leadership skills, and strengthen connections across our community.

Are you a young professional looking to grow your career and learn from an industry expert?

As a **mentee**, you'll be paired with an experienced professional who can offer real-world guidance, perspective, and support to help you reach your goals.

What to Expect As A Mentee:

- One mentor thoughtfully matched to your goals and experience
- One quarterly meeting (virtual or in person)
- Simple tools and support to help you get the most from your mentorship
- A chance to grow professionally, personally, and within the AWRF community

Are you an experienced professional (40+) who's passionate about developing future leaders?

As a **mentor**, you'll be matched with a young professional from a different company and department offering them insight, perspective, and guidance they can't get anywhere else.

What to Expect As A Mentor:

- One mentee, matched based on complementary backgrounds
- One quarterly meeting (virtual or in person)
- Simple tools and support to guide the relationship
- A chance to give back, connect, and stay active in shaping the industry's future

This isn't just about advice. It's about connection. It's about growth for both mentor and mentee. Let's build something that lasts together!

Interested in joining the program? Please email nicole@awrf.org for more information.

Safety Alert

Safety is at the heart of everything we do here at pewag and Modulift. All Modulift products conform to the highest safety standards and global regulations including DNV 2.22 for lifting appliances, ASME B30.20: Below the Hook Lifting Devices, and ASME BTH-1: Design for Below the Hook Lifting Devices.

Combining Modulift manufactured products with those not produced by Modulift constitutes a deviation from the manufacturer's (Modulift) recommendations as per ASME B30.20-1.2.3. Such use carries significant risks, including invalidation of certifications by Modulift and lack of User Manual.

Such use at any capacity and span lays entirely at the user's own risk.

We feel it is our duty as a respected brand in the lifting industry to let everyone know what issues could arise if Modulift products are combined with other brands. We remind you to always check for the Modulift Data Plate, pictured here, on all components of your spreader beam.



AWRF BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPOTLIGHT

Mike Peters



Glimpse into your life: I have been happily married for 38 years. We have two children—a 33-year-old son and a 31-year-old daughter—both married and living in the same town. They are building successful careers with excellent companies. We are also blessed with a 4-year-old grandchild. I have often been told, “Just wait until you have grandchildren”—and they were absolutely right; it has been an absolute joy!

What inspired you to join the board? I have been a dedicated member of AWRF for over 30 years. It is a privilege to be part of such a respected and high-quality organization. Maintaining that standard requires committed members to step forward and serve in leadership roles. Having watched many exemplary leaders guide this organization from its inception, I now look forward to contributing my part to its continued success.

Is there a book, podcast, or leader that has inspired your approach to leadership? I have been fortunate over the years to learn from many outstanding individuals—business leaders from our industry, members of my Rotary Club, valued customers, church mentors, and personal friends. Each has influenced the development of my leadership style in meaningful ways. Leadership is a continual journey of growth and refinement, one in which there is always room to learn and improve.

What excites you most about the mission of AWRF? Professionally, AWRF has been an invaluable resource for networking and for staying informed on the latest trends and

best practices within our industry. The opportunity to engage with industry experts who generously share their knowledge has been instrumental in advancing my career and supporting the growth of our company. An added benefit has been the many lasting friendships I've developed over the years—with competitors, vendors, and customers alike.

What do you hope to accomplish while in your current role? I was honored to be nominated to serve on the AWRF Board of Directors. I chose to join the board to contribute meaningfully to both our industry and the organization we proudly represent. The opportunity to collaborate with such a diverse and dedicated group of professionals to strengthen and advance our industry was one I could not pass up.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work? I greatly enjoy spending time with my family. We have always been an active, athletic family, participating in a variety of sports and outdoor activities. Now that our children's high school and college sports days are behind us, we spend much of our time together on the lake—boating, water skiing, wake surfing, and riding Jet Skis. It has been a true joy and blessing to watch our 4-year-old grandson begin to learn these activities and to share in those experiences with him.

What advice would you give AWRF Members currently seeking more out of their membership? Get Involved. Attending events and breakout sessions is an excellent way to gain knowledge and learn best practices. Active participation is the key to maximizing the value of your AWRF membership.



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OZ Lifting Delivers Second Funded Police Dog

Winona, Minnesota-based OZ Lifting Products LLC has delivered the second police dog from its new funding initiative to the Code Blue K9 program — in time for this year’s GivingTuesday on December 2.



Steve and Jane Napieralski, of OZ Lifting Products, present Chief Pizzano and Lt. Grimes from the Pleasant Hill Police Department with a \$12,000 donation for the acquisition and training of a specially imported K9. Trace Erickson, of Code Blue K9, is far right. This dog will be trained in the 2026 course.

The manufacturer of davit cranes and industrial lifting equipment is committed to funding training for a new police dog every year. Having placed a dog, named ‘Ozkar’, at the City of New Hampton Police Department in 2024, the Pleasant Hill Police Department, also in Iowa, will become the latest recipient of a fully trained animal.

When Shawn Hoffman, a Pleasant Hill Officer, takes delivery of the dog, it will be trained in narcotics detection; patrol work; building and article search; tracking; criminal apprehension; and vehicle searches. Trace Erickson, a former law enforcement officer, leads 13-week training programs — even utilizing an out-building on the property of OZ Lifting’s new 40,000 square-foot facility.

Steve Napieralski, president at OZ Lifting, said: “I know Trace through our local YMCA. He has a training center where he lives, but utilizes several different buildings in the Winona area, including our place of work. There are many police departments that would love to have a dog on staff but can’t afford the upfront cost. My wife, Jane, and I felt this was another way to give back to the community.”

The Midwest faces ongoing challenges related to narcotics. Police K9 units are vital in combating these issues, providing efficient and effective drug detection, while enhancing community safety. The successful introduction of a dog to the City of New Hampton Police Department is further evidence of the value of the Code Blue K9 program — and ongoing funding.

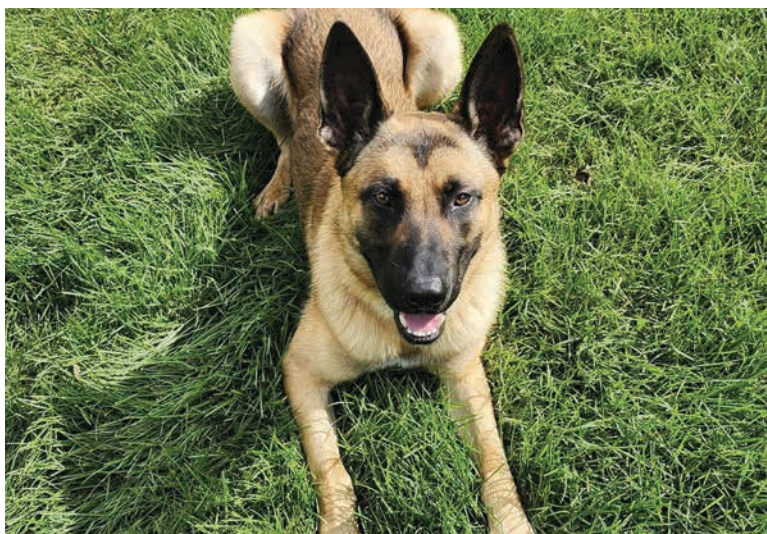
If there is a police department in another city looking for a dog, they are invited to send a written request outlining how they will use the animal in their community. If multiple departments are looking, a decision will be made on which one gets the next dog to be trained.

Napieralski added: “We are always accepting applications; they can either go directly to Trace or mark inquiries for my attention. Trace’s classes fill up fast — because of his expertise, his programs are always in high demand. It’s no surprise that Trace won a special award with one of his K9s, while he was still in law enforcement.”

As part of the agreement, OZ Lifting-funded dogs that pass through Erickson’s program will have ‘OZ’ somewhere in their name, as is the case with ‘OZkar’, at the City of New Hampton Police Department.

A serial philanthropist, OZ has also donated to the American Legion, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Habitat for Humanity, and Winona Area Humane Society. It also supports local youth sports, schools, and organizations such as the Rotary Club. Anyone interested in supporting Code Blue K9 programs, should contact OZ Lifting for details.

· *GivingTuesday*, referred to as #GivingTuesday on social media, is always the Tuesday after Thanksgiving in the U.S.



This is ‘OZkar’, OZ’s first K9, gifted in 2024. He graduated the 2025 K9 training program this year.

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Talurit Group brings UK-proven, certified wholesale lifting & safety supplies to the global market

Talurit Group is proud to announce the global availability of its wholesale Lifting & Safety Supplies range, previously offered only through Talurit UK. Originally developed to meet the company's own production needs, the range has been refined through years of hands-on use and close customer collaboration. With a strong track record in the UK market where Talurit UK has grown to become the second-largest supplier in its segment, the offer now scales across all the Talurit Group subsidiaries to support their wholesale customers worldwide.

Engineered for daily industrial duty with safety at the core, the range spans rigging hardware and fittings, chain and hoisting, and load restraint – highlighted by complete Grade 8 and Grade 10 chain systems. To ensure top quality, products are verified in-house under documented ISO 9001 procedures. Specifications are controlled and continuously refined through testing and field feedback. Conformity is declared by product line, with proof-testing where applicable. Clear documentation, markings, and full traceability give customers compliant, confident sales – with no additional assurance workload.

“We began building this range more than 15 years ago because our own operations demanded dependable, traceable, and well-documented lifting gear,” says Victor Lindh, CEO at Talurit Group. “Since then, it has proven itself with customers in the UK over many years. Taking it global is a natural next step in our commitment to deliver greater value to our customers. This enables them to offer safer, more reliable products while improving their margins. By embedding Talurit’s heritage into these technologies we engineered and specified the range to meet not only the relevant EN and ASTM requirements, but also our own in-house programme. This is the same rigorous approach we’ve applied to our products for 77 years. For example, we conduct fatigue testing at nearly four times the typical standard to ensure our entire offering is harmonised in performance.”

Global rollout will be phased over the coming months led by Talurit Group’s newest subsidiary in the UAE, together with the German and North American



branches. The parent company in Sweden, Talurit AB, is well on its way and has already shipped initial orders in the past quarter, signalling readiness across supply, documentation, and support. Catalogues are available on request and product samples can be ordered directly. The range will make its first international showing at LiftEx 2025 in Liverpool on 18–19 November 2025, where a large Talurit® team will be available.

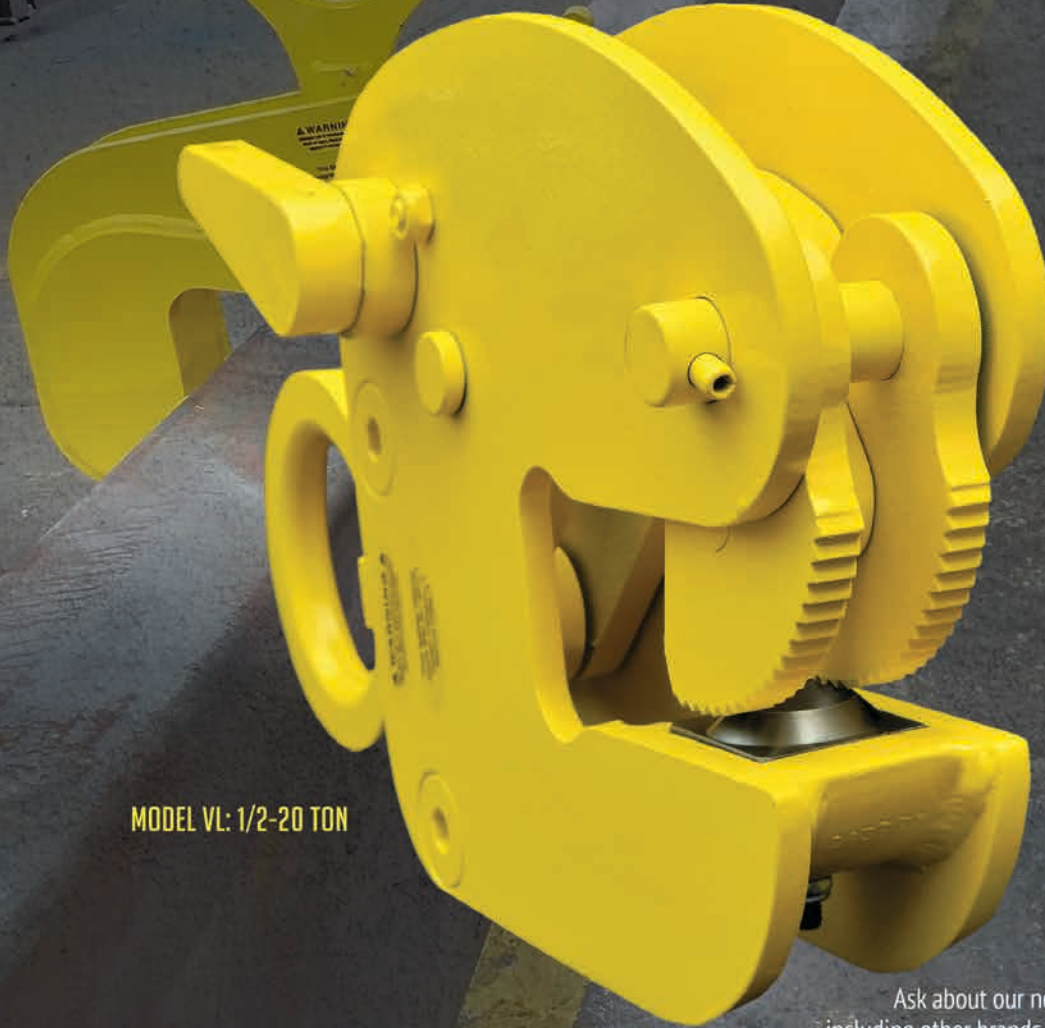
“Our UK customers appreciate the reliability and rapid, dependable supply we provide,” said Neil Cooke, Managing Director at Talurit UK. “We’ve refined this offering for more than 15 years using realworld feedback. As we expand internationally, our priorities stay the same: proven products and systems, expert guidance and – most importantly – responsive support. By handling assurance and compliance, we free customers to focus on their business.”

The range is stocked across selected Talurit Group hubs and backed by technical support and full documentation – meaning certified products, clear paperwork and traceability as standard. As the phased rollout continues, customers can extend their offer with assured, audit-ready lifting solutions – confident in safety, confident in supply, and confident in the partner behind it. The Talurit® development team is actively expanding the assortment and further tightening specifications in upcoming releases. For more information, please visit www.talurit.com or contact them directly.



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AWRF BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPOTLIGHT

Scott Postelwait



What inspired you to join the board? I've been coming to AWRF since 2021 and felt like it was time to become more involved in the organization and thought it's a great opportunity to develop new relationships and keep informed of what's going on in the industry.

Is there a book, podcast, or leader that has inspired your approach to leadership? I've been fortunate to learn from my dad who was a great leader in the industry and has taught me how to lead with integrity, humility, and a commitment to doing the right thing. Watching how he treated others with respect, patience has taught me that leadership isn't about authority, but about service and character.

What excites you most about the mission of AWRF? Promoting safe practices and guidelines for fabrication of lifting and rigging equipment.

What do you hope to accomplish while in your current role? I hope to help promote industry growth and networking.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work? I enjoy spending time with family and friends, watching our kids play sports, and spending time outdoors hunting and fishing.

What advice would you give AWRF Members currently seeking more out of their membership? I would strongly encourage members to participate in meetings and network with as many members as possible. There is a wealth of knowledge out there to learn from.

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Leadership in Action: Searle Excels At Intermediary Role at Laclede Chain

How translating between teams turns good designs into reliable rigging hardware.

When Melissa Searle of St. Louis joined **Laclede Chain Manufacturing** in 2016, she expected to gain experience as a mechanical engineer and move on. Nine years later, she's Laclede's Director of Operations, using both her technical background and people-first approach to make a difference.



Melissa Searle

Searle acts as the intermediary between the engineering and plant teams and the sales team. She translates technical information for the sales group—and carries field feedback back to engineering—so products match real-world use. She's valued for her ability to translate in both directions.

Over time, Searle moved from day-to-day manufacturing into design oversight and sales support. "My passion is probably more in leadership and development," she says. That shift placed her at the natural "load point" of the business, where design decisions meet operating realities and customer needs.

Founded in 1854 as a St. Louis blacksmith shop supplying wagon hardware for westbound wagon trains, Laclede today ships chain across North America, with additional customers in Mexico and Canada.

How AWRF Benefits Members

Searle attended her first **AWRF** meeting in 2017 and began going regularly in 2019. Early on, someone told her that once you get involved in this industry, you never leave. "I didn't believe them at first," she says. "Looking back now, they were 100 percent right. This industry hooked its claws into me. It's always different, always changing, and the people are so great that it would be really hard to leave."

Today, she serves as Chair of the Technical Communications Committee and Vice Chair of the Chain & Chain Slings Subcommittee. The payoff, she says, is the rare chance to swap

ideas with customers and competitors alike, troubleshoot real issues, and build relationships that strengthen the whole lifting community.

Searle's Leadership Goals

Searle aims to foster a **culture of growth and leadership**. She teaches her team—and learns from them—continually raising standards. Her philosophy is simple: to change a behavior, first change a belief. This process begins with understanding people well enough to help them see problems in new ways.

A formative lesson came early. A powder-coat fixture that looked perfect in CAD failed on the floor. Operators found it cumbersome. The experience pushed her to co-design with the individuals who run the process. This practice continues to guide her leadership and product decisions.

"If operators won't use it," she says, "it doesn't matter that it works on paper."

How Laclede Meets the Needs of Rigging Shops

For AWRF members, Laclede supplies standard alloy chain for slings and Grade 70 for tie-downs, shipping throughout the United States with additional customers in Mexico and Canada.

Searle's current focus is building out a domestic fittings line—sling hooks and related components—to pair with chain slings. As a result, the system performs as intended from the master link to the load. Closing the loop between chain, heat treat, proof test, and fittings helps deliver reliability where it matters most: in the lift.

Recruiting the Next Generation

Like many manufacturers, Laclede is navigating an aging workforce and the challenge of attracting and retaining younger talent. Some of Laclede's jobs are hot, dirty, and physical—and demand mechanical skill to run cam-driven weld machines and keep lines moving.

Laclede promotes the industry with job fairs, high-school visits, Manufacturing Day tours, and an open-door approach to plant walk-throughs.

Searle's pitch to youth for joining the industry is straightforward: the work is hands-on and has a high impact. "Quality chain and fittings help ensure crews go home safe," she says. Giving students a chance to touch fixtures, see welds, and watch proof-testing connects the dots between production and purpose.

Women Urged to Consider Manufacturing Jobs

Searle sees women succeeding across the business—from inside sales and support roles to leadership. Production welding remains more male-dominated, while assembly includes more women. She is currently the **sole woman on the executive leadership team** following recent turnover.

“Our CEO doesn’t see gender for any role,” she says. “He sees talent. If you have the talent and can do the job, he’s on board.”

How do you get respect? Searle reveals that her approach on the shop floor is simple: **prove yourself** and don’t be afraid to get dirty. “I have a really good group of managers. We get along, respect each other, and work through challenges. I don’t get a lot of pushback for being a woman.”

Representation matters, too. Searle advocates putting women front and center at job fairs and in company stories so candidates can see real role models and career paths.

Diversity Adds Value

“Don’t let the word *manufacturing*—or the stigma around it—keep you from taking a job,” Searle says. Women add depth through different perspectives. Put a new outlook in the room and blind spots surface, which can lead to **better products and stronger teams**. Diverse leadership teams and focus groups, she adds, are practical ways to bring that value into everyday decisions.

Why Rigging Captivates Searle

A former soccer and softball player who now competes in contact flag football (and helps coach a high-school girls’ team), Searle brings a competitive, team-first mindset to operations. She loves building capability, encouraging high standards, and helping others to grow.

For women considering the field, she points to “bridge roles” that link engineering, operations, and sales—and to AWRF’s training, networking, and technical forums that accelerate learning.

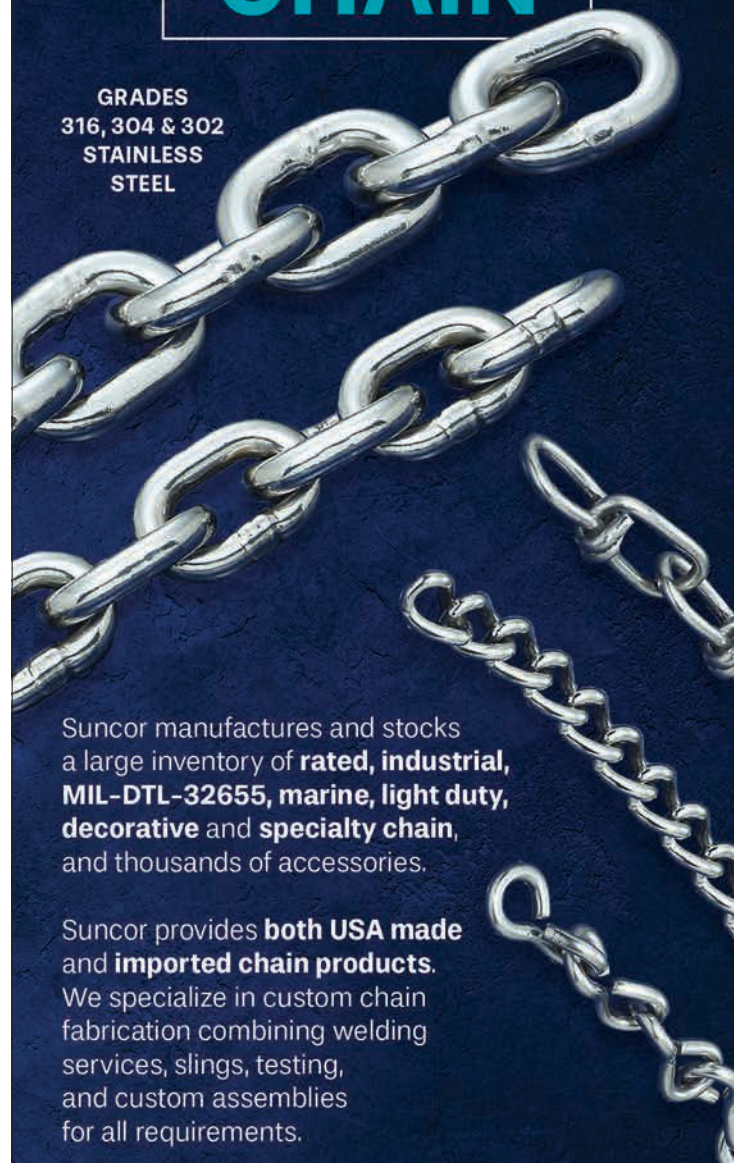
The reason she stays is the same reason she started: impact. “When I spot one of our hooks in the wild, that never gets old,” she says. “It’s a reminder that what we make helps people lift safely.” Her recommendation is just as direct: **“Jump in. It’s fun and rewarding.”**



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CERTIFICATIONS



2020	
Injured Area	% of All Injuries
Abdominal	1.22%
Arm	6.10%
Back	14.63%
Chest	3.66%
Elbow	4.88%
Eye	2.44%
Face	2.44%
Finger/Thumb	9.76%
Foot	7.32%
Groin	1.22%
Hand	15.85%
Head	4.88%
Hip	1.22%
Knee	7.32%
Leg	2.44%
Neck	1.22%
Shoulder	4.88%
Thumb	2.44%
Toe	1.22%
Unknown/COVID-19	4.88%
	100.0%

2021	
Injured Area	% of All Injuries
Abdominal / Tors	2.15%
Arm	2.15%
Back	16.13%
Ear	5.38%
Eye	7.53%
Finger	19.35%
Foot	3.23%
Groin	1.08%
Hand	16.13%
Head	5.38%
Knee	7.53%
Leg	2.15%
Shoulder	7.53%
Thumb	3.23%
Heatstroke	1.00%
	100.0%

YEAR TO YEAR INJURY SUMMARY

In the Safety Survey

When member companies participate in the AWRP Safety Program and submit detailed injury data from their OSHA 300 logs, it allows us to identify and track industry-wide injury trends. As expected in our field, injuries to fingers and backs remain the most common, accounting for 16.13% and 12.90% of all reported cases, respectively.

Overall, the most frequently reported injury type was strain (27.42%), followed by laceration (19.35%). These insights help companies implement proactive measures to reduce the likelihood of workplace injuries and minimize time away from work.

To support these efforts, the HSE Committee developed the Stretch and Flex poster as a visual reminder to help workers reduce fatigue and prevent potential injuries. If your company would like additional copies, please contact the AWRP office.

Please note that all company-reported accident information remains strictly confidential. Only AWRP staff have access to individual submissions, and all data is presented in aggregate form so that no company can be identified. We appreciate your continued trust and participation in this program.

The more we understand about workplace injury patterns, the better equipped we are to educate, train, and protect our employees.

2022		2023		23 over 22	2024		24 over 23
Injured Area	% of All Injuries	Injured Area	% of All Injuries		Injured Area	% of All Injuries	
					Ankle	1.61%	1.61%
Arm	4.94%	Arm	8.14%	3.20%	Arm	8.06%	-0.08%
Back	12.35%	Back	8.14%	-4.21%	Back	12.90%	4.76%
		Chest	2.33%	2.33%			
Ear	1.23%	Ear	2.33%	1.10%			
		Elbow	2.33%	2.33%	Elbow	6.45%	4.12%
Eye	8.64%	Eye	2.33%	-6.31%	Eye	1.61%	-0.72%
		Face	1.16%	1.16%	Face - eyebrow	1.61%	0.45%
Finger	13.58%	Finger	11.63%	-1.95%	Finger	16.13%	4.50%
Foot	11.11%	Foot	2.33%	-8.78%			
Groin	1.23%	Groin	1.16%	-0.07%			
Hand	9.88%	Hand	20.93%	11.05%	Hand	6.45%	-14.48%
Head	7.41%	Head	8.14%	0.73%	Head	3.23%	-4.91%
				0.00%			
Knee	9.88%	Knee	6.98%	-2.90%	Knee	8.06%	1.08%
Leg	3.70%	Leg	4.65%	0.95%	Leg	6.45%	1.80%
					Mouth	1.61%	1.61%
					Ribs	3.23%	3.23%
Shoulder	6.17%	Shoulder	6.98%	0.81%	Shoulder	6.45%	-0.53%
Thumb	2.47%	Thumb	3.49%	1.02%	Thumb	6.45%	2.96%
		Torso	3.49%	3.49%			
		Wrist	2.33%	2.33%	Wrist	3.23%	
Misc.- heat stroke, spider bite, fainted, neck, allergic reaction	7.41%	Misc.-Dermatitis	1.16%	-6.25%	Unknown-(3) Falls Lungs - fumes	6.45%	5.29%
	100.0%		100.0%			100.0%	

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WireCo Introduces UNION Gladiator Shield™ Protection System to Extend Hoist Rope Life and Cut Mining Downtime

Leawood, KS, USA, 09.22.2025 – WireCo® has introduced the UNION Gladiator Shield™ protection system, a patent-pending solution engineered to safeguard shovel hoist ropes from rock damage and abrasion in surface mining operations.

Designed for use with WireCo's Tuf Max and Gladiator Hoist Ropes, the Gladiator Shield protection system is applied to the rope section directly above the dipper, the area most exposed to falling debris during loading. Its function is to defend this vulnerable section from rock strikes and surface wear that can prematurely age a rope and trigger costly unplanned outages. The Shield protects the polymer and outer wires to help extend rope longevity; it is available in diameters from 2-1/4 in. to 2-7/8 in. for high-performance hoist rope systems.

"Customers have pointed out for years that the section of rope over the dipper takes a beating from rockfall. Our Gladiator Shield protection system addresses that challenge head-on with a practical, factory-installed layer of protection," said Mark Blankenship, Mining Product Manager at WireCo. "By protecting the rope where damage happens most often, we are helping mines improve rope life and reduce costly, unplanned downtime."

Field trials at a U.S. mine using UNION Gladiator Hoist Rope showed noticeable improvements in the rope spans protected by the Gladiator Shield protection system, supporting longer service life and more reliable shovel performance in critical applications. In an industry where average shovel downtime is estimated at \$22,000 per hour, even modest gains in rope durability can translate quickly into avoided costs. With hoist rope sets costing between \$20,000 and \$30,000, the Shield represents a small incremental investment that can pay for itself in less than an hour of avoided downtime.

"Since implementing Gladiator Shield with our hard rock ore mining customers, we have seen a significant reduction in rope damage at the bale, historically one of the highest wear points," said a Mining Distribution Manager of WireCo products. "Customers are now experiencing longer service life and fewer unexpected rope changes, resulting in reduced downtime and lower operating costs."

Now at the patent-published stage in the United States, the Gladiator Shield protection system demonstrates WireCo's commitment to investing in original engineering that addresses long-standing industry challenges.



The Gladiator Shield rock protection system was developed after on-site evaluations highlighted recurring damage at the dipper/bucket interface caused by rockfall and abrasion. In the past, mine operators attempted to solve this problem with cumbersome homemade methods such as sheet metal wraps or heavy clamps. By contrast, WireCo's factory-installed solution is faster, safer and more effective.

Now at the patent-published stage in the United States, the Gladiator Shield protection system demonstrates WireCo's commitment to investing in original engineering that addresses long-standing industry challenges. The company is also evaluating other potential applications for the technology, including static locations on shovels and draglines that experience high abrasion.

"Safety and productivity go hand-in-hand," Blankenship added. "Every time you cut down the risk of a rope failing early at the bail, you're not just keeping crews safer, you are also keeping production on track."

For more information about the Gladiator Shield rope protection system, please contact WireCo or visit www.gladiatormining.com or www.wireco.com.



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Bishop Lifting Acquires American Rigger's Supply, Expanding Footprint into Kansas City and the Midwest

Houston – September 4, 2025 – Bishop Lifting (Bishop), a portfolio company of Altamont Capital Partners, today announced the completed acquisition of **American Rigger's Supply, Inc.** (American Rigger's), a leading sling fabrication and rigging supply company headquartered in Kansas City, Kansas.

Founded more than 50 years ago by **Chris Hughes**, American Rigger's has been family-owned and operated since its inception. Today, it is owned by Chris's daughter, **Jennifer Hughes**, and serves a wide range of industries through its fabrication capabilities and service offerings. American Rigger's designs and manufactures custom lifting solutions made from wire rope, chain, webbing, wire mesh, and continuous fiber. In addition, the company provides training in rigging and fall protection, equipment inspections, proof testing, and repair of lifting devices.

This acquisition marks Bishop's **15th acquisition since 2012** and the **eighth add-on** since Altamont's investment. The Kansas City location adds a

strategically important branch to Bishop's network, strengthening its presence in the Midwest and enhancing its ability to serve customers locally with a broad suite of lifting products and services.

Following the transaction, **Jennifer Hughes** and founding employee **Jim Leach** will assist with the transition. **Neal Edwards** will serve as Branch Manager, leading day-to-day operations.

"Bishop Lifting is the right fit for our employees and our customers," said Jennifer Hughes, owner of American Rigger's Supply. "I am proud to see the company my father started more than 50 years ago join a team that will continue his legacy, invest in our people, and provide expanded opportunities for growth."

"The acquisition of American Rigger's strengthens Bishop's footprint with an important branch in Kansas City and broader access to the Midwest," said **Chase Beeler**, Managing Director at Altamont Capital Partners. "American Rigger's has delivered impressive growth in recent years, and we look forward to building on that momentum with Bishop's broader products, services, and resources. We are proud to welcome their team to the Bishop family."

Bishop Lifting Announces Grant Garrett as Chief Executive Officer

Houston, Sept. 15, 2025 - Bishop Lifting (Bishop), a market-leading, value-added distributor of lifting products and solutions, today announced the appointment of **Grant Garrett** as Chief Executive Officer.

Grant joins at a pivotal moment for Bishop. Through a series of acquisitions in the past year, the company has recently expanded its footprint into Canada, Georgia, and Kansas. With these additions, Bishop operates 45 branches across North America and has completed eight acquisitions in the four years since partnering with Altamont Capital. Grant plans to continue Bishop's growth both organically and through M&A.



Grant has a strong track record of scaling great businesses like Bishop. He most recently served as Chief Executive Officer of M&D Distributors. Prior to joining M&D, Grant served in various Executive, Director, and Regional roles overseeing sales and operations for multiple business units and divisions at FleetPride, HD Supply, and Harbor Freight Tools.

"I am thrilled to join the Bishop team as the company continues to scale its presence in the lifting and safety products and services market," said Grant. "I look forward to working with the team as we grow and expand our presence in new and existing markets."



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Commercial Group Lifting Products has successfully acquired F.D. Lake Co.

Commercial Group Lifting Products, headquartered in Taylor, MI, has successfully acquired F.D. Lake Co., located in Grand Rapids, MI. F.D. Lake, a full-service fabricator of rigging and lifting products, boasts a diverse customer base across Western and Northern Michigan. Founded in 1948 by the Lake family, the company was sold to the Carlsen family in 1971, who continued to operate it until this acquisition.

This acquisition strengthens Commercial Group's position as the premier supplier of rigging and lifting products to industries such as automotive, steel, construction, and utilities, both in Michigan and beyond. Moving forward, the F.D. Lake brand will remain a key part of the Grand

Rapids market, as Commercial Group intends to maintain the company's established name.

Mike Posey, F.D. Lake's President for the past 35 years, will continue to lead the Grand Rapids branch and will join the management team at Commercial Group.

Gar Knight, President of Commercial Group, comments:

"Both Commercial Group and F.D. Lake are well-established, family-owned businesses with strong reputations and cultures. We are excited to welcome the F.D. Lake team into the Commercial Group family."

Founded in 1951, Commercial Group is a privately held company specializing in rigging and lifting products. The company operates facilities in Taylor, MI (Detroit), Grand Rapids, MI, Gary, IN (Chicago), Cleveland, OH, Cincinnati, OH, and Columbus, OH.

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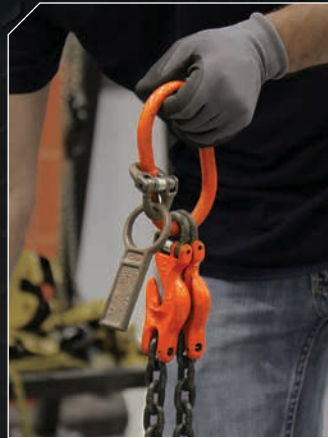


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The CDFXA is available as a **standalone hook** or as a **fully integrated assembly with master links** for one-, two-, and four-leg chain slings. With sizes ranging from 9/32” to 5/8” — and individual hooks offered down to **7/32”**—the CDFXA provides one of the most complete ranges on the market.

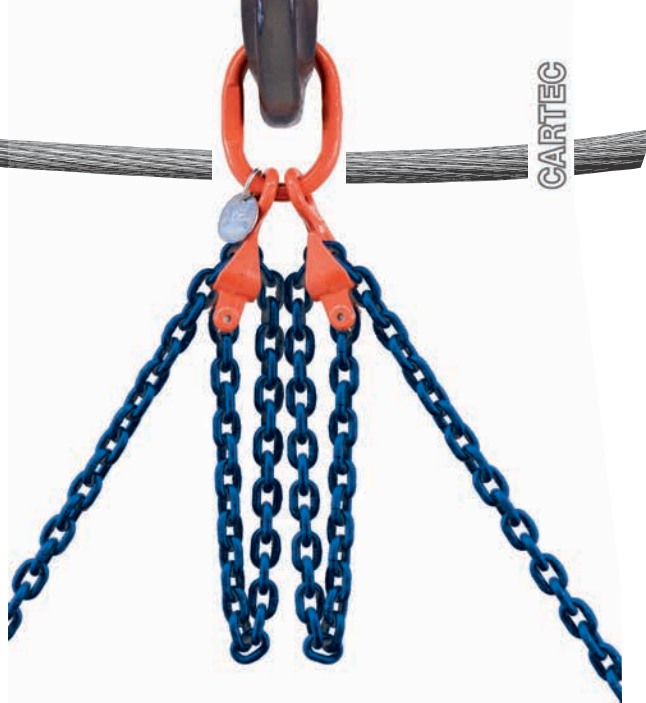
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Welcoming Erica Page to the AMH Sales Team

We are pleased to announce that **Erica Page** has joined **All Material Handling (AMH)** as **Regional Sales Manager**, bringing over 20 years of experience in the lifting and rigging industry.



Erica began her career in the early 2000s with **Newco Manufacturing**, where her commitment to customers and product reliability led her from the sales department to a leadership role as **General Manager**, serving more than 15 years in that capacity. Following Newco’s acquisition by **Muncy Industries**, she continued to oversee operations and later took on the role of **QSEU Manager**, guiding the organization through a successful ISO certification and strengthening a culture of quality and continuous improvement.

In 2018, Erica joined **Pewag Chain** as a **Regional Sales Manager**, supporting customers across the Gulf region and Midwest. During this time, she further expanded her understanding of diverse industry needs and deepened her dedication to providing safe, dependable, and innovative lifting solutions.

With more than two decades of experience, Erica is driven by a core belief shared throughout our industry: **safety, trust, and teamwork are the foundation of every successful lift**. Her passion for serving customers, combined with her hands-on expertise, makes her an excellent addition to the AMH team.

“I joined AMH because of the genuine care they show their customers and the quality of the products they provide. I am excited to grow with the team and continue serving our industry with the same dedication that has guided me since day one.” — **Erica Page**

Please join us in welcoming **Erica Page** to AMH — we are excited for what we will accomplish together.

YOU ARE A SMALL MANUFACTURER. HERE'S HOW TO USE AI IN 2026

Continued from page 37

Finally, watch robotics.

Only the big companies are investing in robotics, but that's quickly changing. Companies like Boston Dynamics, Atlas Robotics, ABB, FANUC, and KUKA are using AI when creating robotic arms and human-like imitators that can move product, count inventory, pack and seal. Robotics shows worth attending include the International Robot Exhibition (IREX) in Japan and the Consumer Electronics Show (CES). Go to one of them so you can see all the new stuff that's real life and making their way to your manufacturing floor. Start thinking about where you can deploy robots in your facility and hone in

on a few of the manufacturers of these devices that you like. I'm betting within two to three years you'll be investing.

As a manufacturer, your business is going to be significantly changed by AI in the next few years. This is absolutely going to happen. Right now, the technology isn't ready for primetime. But as it approaches adolescence and then adulthood, no manufacturer will be able to compete without doing all the things I have listed above. You've got about two to three years to prepare. You should start now.

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AWRF BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPOTLIGHT

Jeff Ashley



What inspired you to join the board? My grandfather, Robert Ashley, was one of the original founding members of AWRF in 1975. Having attended numerous General Meetings over the years, I've developed a deep appreciation for the organization's mission and impact. I believe this is the right time for me to contribute meaningfully and help strengthen the foundation that has been built by those who came before us.

Is there a book, podcast, or leader that has inspired your approach to leadership? Reggie Campbell has had a profound influence on my leadership philosophy. His book *Radical Wisdom* and the mentoring framework he developed through *Radical Mentoring* have shaped how I view leadership—not as a position of authority, but as a calling to serve others with intentionality, humility, and authenticity. Campbell's approach reminds me that true leadership is about building into others and leaving a legacy through meaningful relationships.

What excites you most about the mission of AWRF? What excites me most about AWRF's mission is its unwavering commitment to advancing safety and education in the rigging and lifting industry. The organization plays a vital role in bringing together professionals who are passionate about raising industry standards and sharing best practices. I'm

inspired by the opportunity to contribute to a community that values integrity, innovation, and continuous improvement, and I look forward to helping further that mission in meaningful ways.

What do you hope to accomplish while in your current role? In my current role, I hope to contribute to the continued growth and relevance of AWRF by fostering stronger member engagement and supporting efforts that enhance safety and innovation across the industry. I aim to build meaningful connections within the community, encourage collaboration among members, and help ensure that AWRF remains a trusted resource and advocate for excellence in rigging and lifting.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work? Outside of work, I enjoy spending quality time with my wife and three children. When time permits, I also enjoy playing golf and spending time with extended family and friends.

What advice would you give AWRF Members currently seeking more out of their membership? I would encourage members to actively engage with the AWRF community, attend General Meetings and take advantage of the educational resources available. The more you invest in building relationships and sharing knowledge, the more value you'll gain from your membership.



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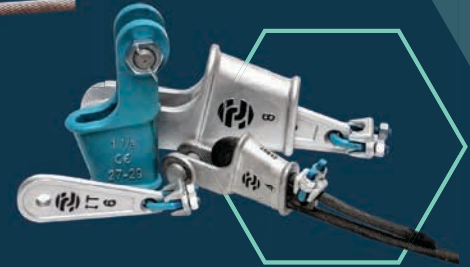


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AD INDEX

A		H	
ADB Hoist Rings.....	58	Holland Nameplate	64
All Material Handling	43	I	
Associated Wire Rope & Rigging	22	IRIZAR	49
B		K	
Bayou City Wire Rope.....	36	Ken Forging.....	50
Bharat Wire Ropes	56	KITO CROSBY	39
Bob's Industrial.....	23	Kulkoni INC.....	68
C		KWS.....	70
Caldwell Group.....	26	L	
CARCANO SPA	15	Laclede	44
Carolina Webbing.....	35	N	
Chant Engineering	33	NACM	53
Chicago Hardware & Fixture Co.	28	National Band & Tag Company.....	28
Columbus McKinnon.....	62	O	
cromox US.....	32	Oppermann Webbing.....	47
D		OZ Lifting.....	34
DE HAAN	24	P	
Dynamic Load Monitoring.....	67	pewag	9, 46
E			
Elebia.....	30		
Elephant Lifting Products	31		
Esmet-Electroline.....	Inside Front Cover		

S		T	
Safety Clamps	52	Talurit.....	Back Cover
Sahm Splice	18	Tiger North America	40
Slingmax	14	V	
StrongYun	24	Van Beest	19
Suncor Stainless	55	W	
Super Tool.....	40	Wirop Industrial	66
T		WSTDA	61
Y		Yoke.....	65



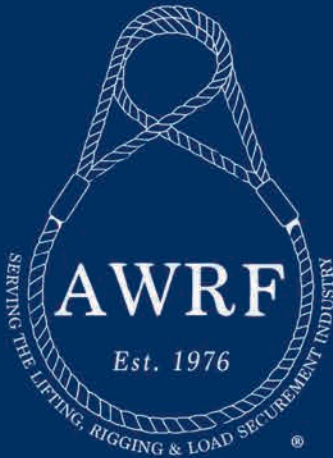

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TECH SUMMIT & P.I.E. 2026

**APRIL 20-23
MARRIOTT MARQUIS
HOUSTON, TX**

TECH SUMMIT & P.I.E. 2027

**APRIL 5-8
MARRIOTT MARQUIS
HOUSTON, TX**

TECH SUMMIT & P.I.E. 2028

**APRIL 2-5
OMNI CHAMPIONSGATE
ORLANDO, FL**

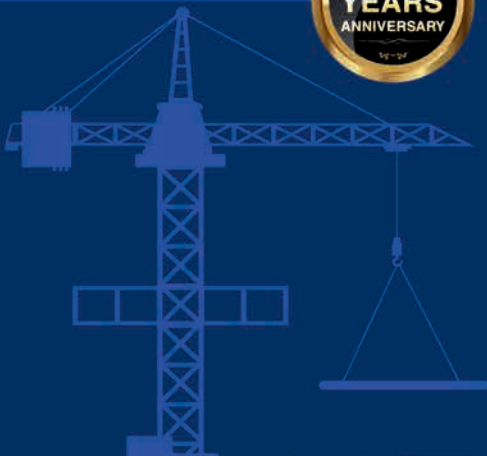
FALL GENERAL MEETING 2026

**OCTOBER 18-21
WAILEA BEACH RESORT,
MARRIOTT MAUI
MAUI, HI**



FALL GENERAL MEETING 2027

**OCTOBER 18-21
OMNI OKLAHOMA CITY HOTEL
OKLAHOMA CITY, OK**



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