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AIST Technology Committees Explore Safety & Material Movement

Joint meetings allow multiple Technology Committees to discuss shared challenges and offer solutions while providing expanded networking opportunities. It's common for AIST Technology Committees to "team up" for meetings, whether it's to discuss a particular topic or tour a facility together.

This winter a whopping five AIST Technology Committees met in Charleston, S.C., USA. The overarching topic of the meeting was safety and material movement. AIST's Safety & Health (SHTC), Rolls (RTC), Cranes (CTC), Material Handling (MHTC) and Transportation & Logistics (TLTC) Technology Committees devised a plan to bring the groups together in one room to discuss safety in trucking, best practices in material handling, new innovations in loading procedures and the specific role of the crane operator.

The meeting was held on 28 February and was led by SHTC chair Paul Thurber, who noted that among the 89 attendees, there was more than 1,000 years of experience in the room.

Between them, the five committees consist of 619 members, including 102 being new members. Looking around the room, Thurber said "what we see is new life" for these committees.

Thurber led the committees through their usual business of nominating officers for the next term and hearing reports from various subcommittees. Mike Leard and Tom Berringer each plugged their committees' respective upcoming training conferences, the Digital Transformation Forum for the Steel Industry and the 29th Crane Symposium.

The real draw of the meeting was the lineup of presentations, which kicked off with Larry Cox of PGT Trucking discussing "Safety Considerations While Loading Trucks." Cox stressed the importance of proper load securement practices and reviewed some of PGT Trucking's safety and training policies. He said the number-one cause of driver injuries, surprisingly, is slips, trips and falls. The company spent US\$1 million on a training facility in 2017, where all of its employees, even office personnel, go through a Flatbed 101 training course.

Jesse DeSpain of Nucor Steel-Texas shared a case study on his facility's tarping shed. In 2022, Nucor Steel-Texas

ruled that truck drivers would no longer be allowed on truck beds on-site. To ensure driver safety and facilitate loading, a tarping shed was installed, comprised of two lanes for tarping and one lane for applying straps.

Next up was a presentation from Kenny Rogers of SafeRack on flatbed and railcar loading platforms. Rogers shared some of SafeRack's solutions, including applications for end of trailer, confined loading areas and overhead tarping systems. He echoed Larry Cox's point regarding making systems easy to use. "You have to get buy-in from the drivers," Rogers said. Driver complacency can be a difficult hurdle to overcome, particularly with older drivers who are unfamiliar with new systems.

Kent Earle and Scott Shinn of 3M then discussed their company's various fall protection solutions and its partnership with the World Steel Association.

Bobby Hamilton of Mazzella Companies presented "Through the Eyes of an Overhead Crane Operator: Responsibility for Safety." He reviewed the responsibilities of both crane owner and crane operator, stressing the importance both have in a facility's inspection program. Hamilton then offered some best practices for handling, attaching and moving loads.

Steven Lubeck of Laser-View Technologies shared a presentation titled "Safety Control Retrofit to Overhead Cranes Using No-Fly Zones and Collision Avoidance" that discussed challenges of operating cranes in heavy industry.

Paul Thurber of Everguard.ai and Nathan Berry of Cleveland-Cliffs Inc. gave the final presentation of the day, which focused on reducing and preventing risks. They cited a few statistics in their presentation; for example, in 2021 non-fatal injury cases increased by 6.3% to more than 2.6 million, and fatal work injuries increased by 8.9% to 5,190.

Following the presentations, the group took an in-depth look at the 2022 AIST Steel Industry Fatalities report. While the specific details of each tragic case were not known to the group, suggestions were solicited as to what could have been done differently, because, as Thurber said, "the goal is to go home at the end of the day." ♦