

The people who make it happen

In May I had the opportunity to participate in this year's PCI Productivity Tour and Quality Summit in Texas. The two-day bus tour of five different PCI member plants was outstanding and very well organized. A total of 187 attendees, close to our limit of 200 people, piled into 3 buses. Of the 187 attendees, 133 were from producer members, 45 were from associate members, and the rest were from the PCI staff. Most remarkably, we had 117 people who were participating in the tour for the first time.

On day one, we went north from our hotel in Austin, starting with the Gate Precast Co. architectural plant in Hillsboro. This plant has made precast concrete components for multiple complex PCI Design Award-winning architectural projects over the years. I learned that they only got a computer numerical control machine last year, a testimony to their master carpenter craftsmanship! Next, we moved down the street to the Gate structural plant. Thanks to Mike Ryan and all the people at Gate who also treated the whole group to a Texas barbecue lunch.

Next, we moved on to Texas Concrete Partners (TCP) in Elm Mott. TCP produces bridge beams and deck panels for the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) on almost 200 acres. Bridge beams stretched as far the eye could see, with almost 2000 on property. Thanks to Mike Spruill and the whole crew for being great hosts.

On day 2 we went south, starting at Heldenfels in San Marcos, where in addition to seeing their TxDOT products and commercial structural operations, they treated us to great breakfast tacos. Thanks to Fred Heldenfels, Chad Petro, and Jake Maier for all their hospitality. We finished the morning at NAPCO Precast in San Antonio, which also specializes in structural commercial products. Thanks to Kevin Medlin, Frank Mitchell, and the crew for opening their doors. We completed the day at Tindall's plant, also in San Antonio, where we saw commercial structural and architectural precast concrete. Thanks to Dean Hawkins and the Tindall staff who got us back on the buses in time.

Altogether, we got to experience the breadth of products our members make. We talk a lot about PCI as a technical institute, and all the engineering is obviously important, but the PCI Productivity Tour celebrates the people who actually make it all happen: setting and stripping forms, stressing strand, tying up reinforcing bar, batching, pouring and finishing concrete, applying finishes, and getting each piece ready to hit the road. These folks are the heart of our industry and the tour showcases the mastery of their work and the great pride they take in it.

Thanks to all of the associate sponsors, the PCI Productivity Committee, and the PCI Quality Enhancement Committee, and congratulations to Randy Wilson, Natalie Martin, Cher Doherty, and the rest of the PCI staff and members who were involved in making the event such a great success. But the real thanks goes to the dozens of men and women at each plant who rolled out the red carpet and organized each station and proudly explained their operations to us all. **D**



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