

# PROJECT MAINE

A Newsletter of the **Maine Chapter, Project Management Institute**

NOVEMBER 2002

[www.pmimaine.org](http://www.pmimaine.org)

207-766-5511

## A Tricky Environmental Project

*Nov. 13 chapter meeting topic: PCBs, cleanup & risk*

A tricky environmental cleanup project involving PCBs will be described at the Nov. 13 PMI Maine meeting by chapter member John Peterson, PMP, an associate project manager with Harding ESE in Portland.

Peterson will present a PCB remediation case study on a recent project at a closed facility in Maine. He will discuss the approach used to apply a combination of new and existing remediation techniques and the Project Management approach used to mitigate inherent risks and uncertainties.

PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) are chemicals used in older electrical transformers. The site cleaned up under this project included active electrical load centers that contained older PCG-type transformers. Harding ESE was tasked to remove and dispose of the transformers.

In the process, evidence of leaks and stains in the area indicated the potential for PCB contamination of floor surfaces, so those had to be included in the remediation project.

Within the immediate area, the project involved relatively

straightforward removal of concrete floors under the necessary engineering controls such as temporarily negative air containment structures. The contamination of outside areas represented a greater challenge because the spread of contamination was not

*The contamination had spread, and the project was riskier*

well defined. The solution, validated by a pilot project, combined physical removal of concrete with a chemical extraction process that resulted in cost savings.

While any remediation project represents significant risks, the process developed in this case added to that element. Certain risks were controllable, others not.

Peterson's case study, which he also presented at the recent PMI Annual Meeting in San Antonio, will summarize the pilot study and the

overall project and remediation approaches used. From a Project Management perspective, he will emphasize risks management approaches and the project controls and performance measures used to manage project costs.

The speaker has been associated over 20 years with environmental investigation, remediation, geotechnical and engineering, as well as mineral exploration and economic resource evaluation projects.

He provides lead support for project controls systems and Project Management discipline lead services for the Harding ESE office in Portland. He is a member of PMI's Environmental Management Specific Interest Group and holds a B.B. in business administration with a minor in geology from Western Illinois University.

The Nov. 13 meeting at UnumProvident on Outer Congress Street, Portland, will open with registration, networking and a buffet at 5:30, and conclude at 8 p.m. Details and directions are available on the Web at [www.pmimaine.org](http://www.pmimaine.org).

## Daily Communication Surprises . . . & How to Fix 'Em

Reality can be exciting . . . when you meet up with it for the first time.

Wait! Wait! That's not as dumb as it sounds. PMI Maine members and guests who attended the Oct. 9 chapter meeting would know exactly what it means.

Rick Brenner of Chaco Canyon Consulting led the group in an interesting and revealing trip

through day-to-day communication disasters. He pointed out the pervasiveness of miscommunication throughout our relationships, and emphasized how simple it can be to prevent it in each case.

One example is Living the Catastrophic Expectation. You get an email that asks, "How did we decide this?" You immediately respond with a

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## Communication Miscues & How to Overcome Them

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defense of whatever it was that was decided. But that wasn't the question.

The original email asked only about the decision process, and the answer jumped to the conclusion that the decision was being attacked. Assuming the worse possible meaning in the question can shift us into a High-stress mode unnecessarily. Why not just say

simply how the decision was arrived at, and see if that settles the matter?

Here's another one: Commitment by Implication. Someone else rewords what you said to commit you to something you never intended at all. You said, "Yes, I'll get you a few names – not many – soon." The answer: "Great! I'll take quality over quantity any time!" Commitments really exist only if they are made with full understanding and freedom. Your proper response is a polite reminder of exactly what it was you agreed to do.

Brenner's program, "In Interpersonal Communication, Quality Really Pays Off." Brenner, a Boston member of the American Society for Quality, aimed his presentation at the work setting, but it is helpful to anyone in all phases of life.

### PMI Maine Meetings 2002-3

*Meetings are at UnumProvident Headquarters  
Building 1, 2211 Outer Congress St. Portland,  
unless otherwise specified.*

**Nov. 13 – Risk Management**  
with **John Peterson, Harding/Lawson**  
*Alison Lynch, Host*

**Dec. 11 – Holiday Party**  
*Steve MacIsaac, Host*

**Jan. 8 – PM Career Paths (Tentative)**  
**Joint Meeting with IEEE**  
*Host TBDt*

**Feb. 12 – Project Management Offices,  
Local Experiences**  
*Bob Laliberte, Host*

**March 12 – How to Create a PM Culture**  
with **Gary Heegens**  
*Bob Laliberte, Host*

**Apr. 16 – Portland Coll. Distance Learning Project**  
with **Tom Patterson, CEO, Applied Learning**  
*Marlene Groman*

**May 14 – MaineToday.com Internet Project**  
*Jim Milliken, Host*

**June 11 – Chapter Strategic Planning Meeting**  
*Steve MacIsaac, Host*

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