

VLA SITE NEWSLETTER

From the World's Premier Centimeter Wave Radio Synthesis Telescope

CONGRATULATIONS

Richard Murillo came back from Caterpillar school on diesel generators in Peoria, Illinois, with a D3500 Master Mechanic Certificate.

AROUND THE VLA

We have two new employees: Chris Guerro is working in the Carpenter Shop and Richard Mendez is on the Track Crew.

The City of Socorro assigned three new students to work at the VLA, Marta del Rio, Gabriel Contreras and Tim Murphy. They have been helping out many different shops, including setting up shelves at the AAB and in the HVAC storage area, transferring grease into 55 gallon drums, pulling weeds, and Marta helped enter inventory into MAINT for Servo.

Sandy Connelly, from ENMU, was the instructor for a Flag Seminar held here at the VLA. Attendees were Adrian Pino, Michael Torres, Chris Naranjo, Jeremy Martinez, Samuel Guerro, James Julian, Raymond Chavez, and Richard Mendez. They receive instruction on how to control traffic when blocking a highway, such as during rail repair on crossings or while a transporter is crossing.

Pete Zamora, Adrian Pino and Pat Trujillo attended welding school in Espanola.

Chris Garcia, Garry Morris and Alison Patrick recently attended the annual NM State EMS Conference in Albuquerque, where Chris and Garry also attended preconference workshops.

NEW CONSTRUCTION AT THE VLA SITE

There's construction activity at the east end of the VLA site, next to the Visiting Scientist Quarters (VSQ)! What's going on? The Interference Protection Group (IPG) at the AOC, which detects, monitors, investigates, and seeks to minimize Radio Frequency Interference (RFI) for the VLA and VLBA systems is getting improved RF Environmental Monitoring System (RF-EMS) equipment and facilities. The new RFI monitoring installation is being engineered by Guy Stanzione, Bob Broilo, and Jon Thunborg at the VLA Site, and IPG engineers Zach Barnes and Dan Mertely at the AOC. Jaime Montero has been busy installing the additional AC power service required for the new RF-EMS trailer electronics equipment. Godin Otero and crew installed the foundation slab and the Antenna Mechanics the tower. The extra monitoring capability of the new RF-EMS will help the IPG keep the air-waves clear and quiet for our current and future Radio Astronomy customers.

D. Mertely

USE YOUR EYE PROTECTION

Occasionally, the need for eye protection is overlooked on many potential hazardous jobs. Our work environment exposes the eyes to a variety of hazards, such as flying objects, splashes of chemicals or hot metals, dusts, and harmful radiation. Eye protection is required where posted and where any grinding, drilling, striking, sanding,

burning, soldering, welding, or any activity likely to cause flying particles is taking place. Employees are required to wear safety glasses at all times while on the job. In addition, where needed, goggles and face shields should be worn as added protection during specific operations. Also, side shields are a key component to safety glasses and should not be removed.

G. Cole

VLBA MAINTENANCE

During this summer's maintenance team visit, metal particles were found in the azimuth wheel bearing grease on the Fort Davis VLBA antenna. This means that the bearings are probably worn out. In the last couple of years we have also had to replace azimuth wheel bearings at Kitt Peak and St. Croix. Since it is very expensive to change wheel bearings, we need to correct this problem. Subsequent analysis has shown that the reason the bearings are failing is that they are subjected to high thrust loads due to wheel misalignment. We are currently investigating the feasibility of replacing azimuth drive wheel assemblies with larger bearings and half-flex gear couplings.

J. Thunborg

PAINT BOOTH

Concrete for the Paint Booth building extension was poured on July 14. Things went smoothly with the help of the Grounds Crew. Jaime Montero and Steve Troy kept busy installing electrical conduits and plumbing runs under the concrete. Charley Chavez and crew started with the framing on July 22.

G. Stanzione

CEMENT MIXER

After inventive work by Jimmy Rexrode and the Auto Shop, the cement mixer works! The Track Crew prepared a loading station next to the Materials Yard, then mixed and poured 13 cubic yards of concrete. The concrete was used to anchor the rails at two spurs as a test to see if we can reduce the problem with rail working loose from the weight of the transporter when moving antennas. Break tests by Engineering, Inc., of Socorro show we are getting a good mix. Another BUEN JALE for the Auto Shop and Track Crew. C. Janes

WORKERS COMPENSATION INJURIES

Workers compensation law requires that when a worker is injured on the job, the employer pay for the workers health care costs and in some cases provide pay to substitute for lost wages.

To protect your right to workers compensation benefits, NRAO requires you to notify your supervisor within one working day of any accident at work. Fill out a Notice of Accident form (located on bulletin boards in the Control Building, Tech Services, and the Antenna Assembly Building), ask your supervisor to sign it, keep one signed copy and give the other copy to your supervisor. Get your employer's permission first before you get any medical care, except emergency care. NRAO has the right to choose a doctor for you at this time or to allow you to choose. Tell all doctors this was a work related injury. For more information on the Workers Compensation Act, read the poster on any of the bulletin boards. G. Cole

VLA SITE ASSEMBLY

On Tuesday, July 22, presentations were given by Phil Diamond, Peter Napier, Dick Sramek and Miller Goss to the VLA Site Employees.

Phil Diamond describes the VLBA as "healthy and reliable." The maintenance teams have had an important impact on serviceability of the VLBA.

Peter Napier hopes for the NRAO Millimeter Array (MMA) Observatory to be the favored NSF astronomy project for the coming decade. Like the VLA, the MMA will synthesize images from an array of radio antennas, but at much higher frequencies. Comprising the array will be 40 moveable antennas, each 8 meters in diameter. Initial plans may include building a two-antenna test interferometer at the VLA over the next three years. If everything goes well, the instrument may be completed as early as 2007.

Though the VLA continues as the world's premier centimeter wave radio synthesis telescope, new technology makes an upgrade of the VLA a tantalizing prospect according to Dick Sramek. Instead of the current discontinuous frequency coverage, receivers could provide continuous coverage from 1 GHZ to 50 GHZ and provide a wider bandwidth. Four to six new antennas located around the state, called the A+ array, would fill the existing coverage gap between the VLA and VLBA.

An assessment of the new Performance Appraisal Process by an employee committee led by Gerry Petencin is available for review in Patty Lindsey's office. Further comment on the PAP and other employee issues may be given to members of the committee; at the site members are Patty Lindsey, Lew Serna, Ramon Gutierrez, and Godin Otero, reports Miller Goss. C. Janes

SAFETY COMMITTEE

The NRAO Safety Committee was formed to keep the Safety Officers in touch with the diverse activities at the VLA, the VLBA sites, and the AOC. New members of the Safety Committee from the VLA site are: Mike Torres, Site & Wye; Chester Moeller, AAB; and Tom Frost, Electrical/Servo/ HVAC. If you have a topic to bring before the Safety Committee, bring it to the attention of a Safety Officer or one of the Committee Members. Gene Cole, Paul Rhodes, and Jon Spargo are the NRAO NM Safety Officers. Many thanks to Richard Murillo and Ramon Molina for serving on the Committee and whose terms expire this month. C. Janes

OVER SPRAY POLICY

The antenna painters will use a wind sock to keep track of the wind direction; when the wind is toward the main site area, they will stop painting. Employees are asked to check personal vehicles and assigned site vehicles while spray painting is taking place. If over spray occurs, the employee must try immediately to remove the paint. Failure to take immediate corrective action for personal vehicles releases NRAO from responsibility. In general, employees who drive their vehicles to the site do so at their own risk. For example, NRAO does not accept responsibility for things like flat tires, accidents between private vehicles, and wind damage that may occur at the site. C. Janes

CDL DRUG/ALCOHOL TEST POLICY

By Federal law, employees holding Commercial Driver's Licenses must be periodically tested for drugs and alcohol. In August, NRAO will begin implementing its policy related to this particular issue. Drug screening will be done through urinalysis and alcohol testing through a breath alcohol test (BAT). Employee names will be pulled in a random manner by Norton Medical Industries, who NRAO has hired to administer the program. The law states that we must test at least 50% of the drivers (28) for drugs at least once a year and must test at least 25% of those drivers for alcohol per year. The majority of on-site testing will be performed by Alex's Transportation. They have certified testers in Belen and will come to the VLA Site, thus lessening the impact on work schedules. Training of drivers and their supervisors may begin as early as August. Jon Spargo will be our coordinator for both the program and training. If, during the screening process any driver tests positive, rehab and counseling will be handled through our health care plan. G. Cole