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BANGOR DAILY NEWS

Section C

## Bangor contractor listens when opportunity calls



## UM's 'bridge-in-a-backpack' gives construction company winning bid



PHOTOS COURTESY OF EDWIN NAGY  
McGee Bridge in Anson was built with UMaine's bridge-in-a-backpack technology.

BY JESSICA BLOCH  
OF THE NEWS STAFF

ORONO — Randy Gardner was interested as soon as he saw the news reports.

Gardner, the owner of a Bangor contracting and construction company, immediately went to the Web site of the University of Maine's AEW Advanced Structures and Composites Center to research the center's "bridge-in-a-backpack" technology, which was unveiled to the public in February.

"I started to dig into the information, and I really think this is a technology we're going to see in wide use very soon," Gardner said. "I took an opportunity to jump in on the ground floor."

A few weeks later, Gardner contacted AEW, formerly known as the Advanced Engineered Wood Composite Center, about that opportunity. He wanted to put in a bid on rebuilding



BANGOR DAILY NEWS PHOTO BY BRIDGET BROWN  
Randy Gardner of Gardner Construction Enterprises in Bangor has finished building the McGee Bridge in Anson using UMaine's bridge-in-a-backpack technology. Gardner is shown Friday at a construction site in Bangor.

the 28-foot-long McGee Bridge in Anson, and he wanted to partner with AEW.

The parties came to an agreement and their \$89,350 bid was the lowest of the offers. The bid was accepted, and construction began Aug. 17. About two weeks later, traffic was rolling on the bridge, which spans Hill Stream on Four Square Mile Road.

The McGee Bridge is now the second in the state, and in the country, to be built using AEW's bridge technology, and the first completed under the auspices of Advanced Infrastructure Technologies LLC, which last February announced it was making a \$20 million investment in the commercialization of the bridge in a backpack and other composite technologies.

Now, AIT managing partner and CEO Brit Svoboda and AEW officials are hoping contractors all over the world will follow Gardner's lead. See *Bridge*, Page C10

## Report: Fewer jobs shed in August

BY KEVIN G. HALL  
MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON — Another important sign of a firming economic recovery emerged Friday from government statistics showing a slowdown in the torrid pace of job losses, even as a larger-than-expected rise in the unemployment rate to 9.7 percent signaled a long road ahead before Americans feel a return to normalcy.

Employers shed 216,000 jobs in August, a significant slowdown from the revised 276,000 jobs lost in July. Following a key manufacturing index showing growth for the first time in 18 months and recent signs that the housing market is firming, Friday's job numbers from the Bureau of Labor Statistics are one more indication that the U.S. economy appears to have hit bottom and is beginning to rebound.

However, the still-rising unemployment rate — up from 9.4 percent in July to the highest rate in more than 26 years — will continue to dampen consumer confidence and business hiring.

"The job market is on the mend, but has a long, painful recovery ahead of it. Businesses are scaling back their layoffs, but they have yet to increase their hiring," said Mark Zandi, the chief economist for Moody's Economy.com. "It won't be until next year before job growth resumes, as the leading indicators — including near-record-low hours worked and falling temporary-help jobs — remain weak."

The significance of Friday's report is that it shows job losses continuing to improve steadily.

"That really is what is important," Christina Romer, the head of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, said on CNBC television. "It's still a terrible number, but it is certainly showing those numbers moderating."

## Jobs news gives boost to stocks

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Stocks jumped in light trading Friday after the government reported that the pace of job losses slowed in August to the lowest level in a year.

The Dow Jones industrial average gained 97 points to halve its loss for the week after the Labor Department said employers cut fewer workers last month. However, the report also showed that the ranks of the unemployed swelled to 9.7 percent, the highest level since June 1983.

Analysts had been expecting the rate to increase to 9.5 percent after unexpectedly dipping in July. The increase initially spooked the market, but stocks later recovered their losses and moved higher. Many economists expect the rate to top 10 percent by early next year.

"The overall picture is things are getting better," said Ryan Larson, senior equity trader at Voyaguer Asset Management.

Unemployment is widely seen as the economy's biggest hurdle to recovery, and concerns about it have been weighing on the stock market. As long as job losses remain high, consumers could hold off spending money, which the U.S. economy badly needs to resume growth.

"The market is looking at directional changes, and so at this state of the economic recovery I think the fact that you see unemployment rising shouldn't be that surprising," said Thomas K.R. Wilson, managing director, institutional investments group, Brinker Capital in Berwyn, Pa.

## Do your research before switching to solar heating

Recently came across a couple of videos online about solar heating. Both were from vendors in the Northeast.

Since autumn is almost upon us again, people naturally are thinking of heating. They also are wondering how to get away from heating with oil or gas. People suspect that the big, bad oil companies are conspiring to gouge us at any given chance. That may or may not be true, but please do your research. Just because someone has a



TOM GOCZE  
THE HOME FRONT

video on YouTube or, worse yet, befuddles some 23-year-old TV journalist (or newspaper reporter — it might happen!), you still need to do your homework. Video does not mean that all the statements are true.

All of the buzz about using fossil fuels and climate change is no reason to abandon common sense when judging advertising claims.

One more time: Videos that tout a given company are usually advertisements. Check the facts with people who are not selling you the hardware you are looking at.

For the record, I will put my reputation (such as it is) on the line: You can usually solar heat 100 percent in Maine. But you need a superinsulated home



PROFESSOR  
DICK HILL  
BY THE NUMBERS

### Facts about oil

In 1901, near Beaumont, Texas, a gush of oil 50 feet into the air accompanied the drilling of a well 1,000 feet deep. A recent oil discovery off Brazil lies beneath 2,000 feet of water, 10,000 feet of rock and 6,000 feet of salt. The projected yield is 8 billion barrels. At one time the Ghawar oil field in Saudi Arabia held 60 billion barrels. Annual U.S. oil consumption is about 7 billion barrels. Worldwide consumption is about 30 billion barrels.

and must be willing to accept some lifestyle changes and have some form of backup system in place — just in case.

The most important thing to realize is that a single solar collector (or, for that matter, several of them) will not eliminate the oil deliverer's visits. There

are some simple rules that I can offer to help you sort out solar heating claims:

- A solar collector generates usable heat only when it is sunny out. It does not matter whether it is a vacuum tube collector or any other collector. Overcast days do not deliver

much usable heat to solar collectors. Some collectors might harness energy on an overcast day, but the amount of energy will not heat anything useful. Period.

- A solar collector will generate 1 to 2 gallons of oil-equivalent energy per year per square foot. In other words, 1 square foot of surface on a collector that is heated by the sun creates enough heat to eliminate a gallon or 2 of oil a year — if the energy is stored and made useful by the balance of the system.

- When the sun shines might not be the time you need solar heat. On average, there is more solar energy available in the spring and summer months.

See *Gocze*, Page C10