

PRECAST INC. MAGAZINE WRITER'S GUIDELINES

About *PRECAST INC. Magazine*

PRECAST INC. is published by NPCA (the National Precast Concrete Association), which represents the precast concrete industry in North America and many locations around the world. *PRECAST INC.* helps precast concrete manufacturers run their operations more effectively, keeps them apprised of emerging issues in business and technology, and educates them about increasing market shares for precast concrete. It offers practical solutions to current workplace problems and discusses new approaches for efficiency and innovation in all areas of precast manufacturing and business. The mission of *PRECAST INC.* is to be the voice for the manufactured concrete products industry. *PRECAST INC.* is published bimonthly in January, March, May, July, September and November.

What is precast concrete?

Precast concrete products range widely, from underground applications such as septic tanks and stormwater treatment systems to above-ground applications such as traffic barriers, bridge spans, wall panels and even works of art. Precast concrete products are manufactured in the controlled environment of a factory, distinguishing them from concrete products that are poured at a work site (cast-in-place concrete).

Must I know something about precast concrete?

No, but the more you understand about the industry, the more it helps you as a writer for *PRECAST INC.* Engineers or industry specialists write most of our technical and safety articles. Our primary freelance needs are general business or technology topics that correlate to the precast concrete industry. Of course, if you are an engineer or a writer specializing in industry, construction or manufacturing technology, then you may be well-suited to write technical and safety articles.

Our audience

More than anything, precast concrete manufacturers are business owners. Our readers are typically small-business owners with 20 to 100 employees. Issues affecting business in general also affect them.

- The circulation of *PRECAST INC.* is about 8,500.
- Our primary readers are owners/principals, engineers, managers and sales staff.
- Our audience includes readers from both large and small organizations. The highest concentration of readers is in the Midwest and Northeast United States.
- Our audience is interested in finding ways to increase sales, manage people and resources, and manufacture quality products.

Articles we use

Article lengths vary from 1,000 to 2,500 words. *PRECAST INC.* publishes articles on many topics:

Features (1,500-2,500 words)

Technical Feature: A technical article pertaining specifically to the production of precast concrete, its application or regulations affecting production appears in each issue. These articles generally require the writer to have in-depth knowledge of engineering, manufacturing, industry and precast production or its use. These articles are written predominately by staff members or industry professionals.

Product/Project Feature: These articles highlight an uncommon or novel precast product that would interest precasters. A construction project utilizing precast concrete is also featured when

possible. We prefer to limit these articles to products or projects pertaining to our members, but variances may apply; a list of members is available on our Web site.

Business/Management Feature: These articles include topics of interest to small-business owners or manufacturers.

Departments (1,000-1,500 words or shorter based on need)

Operations: Generally cover topics related to solving problems in the precast production process or in managing costs.

Marketing: Marketing strategies and issues, sales techniques and issues, advertising, promotion or public relations.

Business/Management: Human resources (benefits, compensation, training, retirement plans, career development, employment and labor law, recruitment and hiring practices and other workplace issues); tax issues, ethics, teamwork, quality assurance, insurance, inventory control, increasing profits, cutting costs, leadership, technology, computers, resources and transportation.

Innovations: Usually cover innovative production processes.

Writing style

Writing style should be concise, yet lively and entertaining. Avoid cliches. We require a third-person perspective and encourage a positive tone and active voice. For stylistic matters, follow the Associated Press Stylebook.

Presenting your idea

Send a standard query letter or a full manuscript with a self-addressed, stamped envelope and we will respond within two months. Electronic submissions are also acceptable (e-mail address provided below). In your query, be clear about the depth of treatment we can expect, topic areas you plan to cover, the tack you will take (how-to, informational, etc.) and the focus. If we agree to proceed with your query, we'll send you a letter of confirmation with additional information along with a standard publishing agreement for you to sign and return. We pay upon acceptance of the manuscript. Expect three to nine months to pass before the article appears in print. If for some reason we can't use your article, you may qualify for a kill fee, in which case you will be free to sell the manuscript to another publication.

Aspects of a winning article

Articles we look for:

- Include anecdotes, quotes and expert testimony. Substantiate issues and conclusions with examples and quotes from experts in the field and, where possible, precast manufacturers (preferably NPCA members, which can be found on our Web site). Three sources should be cited; five are preferred, especially for feature-length articles. Examples and specific cases adding insight and clarity to the subject greatly increase the article's value.
- Have a strong "how-to" angle. When the topic is pertinent and the treatment is adequate, we're very receptive to a how-to article.
- Are related to the industry. Articles must bear some relationship to precast concrete manufacturing, but not necessarily only to concrete manufacturers.
- Provide new information. This can be a tough area to judge. When in doubt, ask.
- Have a narrow focus. Unless a whole new subject is emerging or has been unreported by *PRECAST INC.*, many topics are too broad to be covered in whole. Narrow the angle to one aspect of the subject.
- Can be augmented with visuals. Photographs, illustrations and charts are important to us. We carefully consider the prospects of achieving this aspect when reviewing articles for publication.

Avoid proprietary materials

PRECAST INC. welcomes good article ideas that benefit our readers. We do, however, expect writers to provide unbiased information. We do not accept articles that: 1) promote services or products in which only one company or individual is cited; 2) are, in the judgment of the editors, tantamount to an advertisement; or 3) require approval by a third party, such as the writer's employer. All publishing and payment arrangements, as well as the hiring of writing services and determination of fees, will be made exclusively by NPCA. *PRECAST INC.* does not accept and will not become involved in arrangements in which an article is paid or submitted for publication by a third party.

Manuscript postscript

Final manuscripts should be accompanied by:

- At least one sidebar
- Information regarding illustrations or photo opportunities
- Contact information for sources in the article
- A brief biography of yourself

Presenting the manuscript

Final manuscripts must be submitted in PC-compatible word-processing formats via e-mail, floppy diskette or CD. Charts and illustrations should be included as separate files in either EPS or TIF format, although we can accommodate most file types.

Rights and payment

Prompt payment is made upon acceptance of the final manuscript. The current payment rate is \$250-\$750, depending on value of the subject, word length and depth of treatment. You will be required to sign a Publishing Agreement before we submit payment. Quality photography and professional graphics may also be purchased separately. In the event we can't use your article, we may pay a kill fee. However, if your manuscript is poorly written or your research is careless, we may reject it without obligation. In your proposal, you must specify whether the article is appearing for the first time, simultaneously with another publication or as a reprint. Previously published articles that are "dusted off" may be acceptable, but you must specify this as well. If you are selling one-time rights or second serial rights, you must specify all publications in which the articles have appeared or are expected to appear and when.

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