

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS GROUP HELPS KEEP MILLENNIALS ENGAGED

Koffel Associates' Young Professionals Group (YPG) began with the goal of helping keep young staffers more engaged and make leadership decision-making more transparent. Going on its third year, the group of young fire protection engineers in Maryland are as serious about its impact on the firm as they are serving fire safety clients. "Our Young Professionals Group grew out of a strategic planning session," explains William E. Koffel, P.E., FSFPE, President of Koffel Associates. The firm has a culture that sees leadership host a surprise breakfast for staff, and it received Smart CEO's Corporate Culture Award last year.

"But we knew we needed to do more to get younger staff involved and to be more transparent about certain decisions within the firm," Koffel says. Engaging young engineers is especially vital for a firm that works closely with neighboring University of Maryland College Park and the Department of Fire Protection Engineering. Indeed, 31 percent of the current Koffel engineers began as interns with 13 only having worked for Koffel.

HOW YPG WORKS

The YPG is active, says current corporate liaison, Mark H. Buschman, P.E., Senior Fire Protection Engineer. And despite the work of the YPG being additional to regular workload, there are currently 17 members in the

YPG. The oldest member of the group is 35 years old—the oldest a member can be. And members meet during lunch hour—once a month. It has officers and elections.

Most of the members are engineers, but all employees are welcome, and are members. And membership is open to employees from all five offices of the firm: Maryland, Connecticut, North Carolina, Indiana, and Massachusetts. Buschman is often asked to address Koffel's Corporate Management team.

THOUGHTFUL PROJECTS

The YPG does work on social and corporate events—such as successful corporate recruiting tailgating socials. But it completes serious deliverables as well. Two such projects include input for a relocation policy for the North Carolina office and as part of its work as a corporate restructuring task group, the use of a "pool" of engineers for projects.

Another project was an effort to help out the 2017 FPE Design Challenge for Maryland high schoolers. This project involved the design, construction, and (burn) testing of a small-scale residential model where the challenge is to provide innovative means of fire detection and suppression. "The FPEDC is a very fulfilling and important part of our recruiting and outreach work," Buschman says. ●