

ALABAMA UTILITY CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

TIM AYERS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
JANUARY 2024



Director's Comments:

2024 is off to a bumpy start. Our state has experienced weather that ranged from brutally cold single digit temperatures accompanied by snow and ice in many parts of the state, as well as milder temperatures that were accompanied by heavy rains. It has certainly made for a challenging month to be productively working outdoors.

January also brought the news of the retirement of one of the best to ever do what they do in our state. No, I'm not talking about Nick Saban, but rather AUCA Board Member Ronnie Golden. Ronnie is a long revered Utility Contractor, but has decided to call it a career. He has faithfully served on the AUCA Board since before I started, and was the President in 2014 when I was hired to become Executive Director.

I will always value the relationship that I've developed with Ronnie over these past 10 years, and consider him not just an industry colleague, but a dear friend. While Ronnie is retiring from the day-to-day grind of being a Utility Contractor, we are grateful that he's agreed to stay on the AUCA Board of Directors for the remainder of this year. His continued wisdom and insight in that capacity will be a great benefit to me, as well as to our members.

On February 6th, Legislators will convene in Montgomery for the start of the 2024 Alabama Legislative Session. Discussions are expected to revolve around key topics such as gaming legislation, education reform, healthcare access, economic development, and environmental policies. Additionally, the session is likely to be shaped by ongoing debates on social issues, including criminal justice reform and voting rights.

AUCA will be tracking all legislation introduced that could be of interest to our members, and will have our Lobbyist, B.T. Crowe down in Montgomery throughout the session. If you have any questions or concerns involving any legislation, please contact us and let us know how we can help.

Tim

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Upcoming Meetings & Events:

Charge the Hill - Legislative Awareness Day

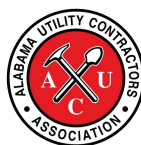
**Thursday, March 7, 2024
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**

**State House Building
11 South Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130**



The 2024 Alabama Legislative Session kicks off on February 6th.

Charge the Hill Day is your opportunity as AUCA members to join together in a unified voice to help educate our Legislators on the concerns of the workforce that supplies, installs, and rehabilitates the critical Infrastructure of water, sewer, gas, electrical, broadband, and other underground utility systems throughout Alabama.



Upcoming Meetings & Events:

AUCA Industry Lunch Meetings
2024 Dates and Locations To Be Announced

Charge the Hill - Legislative Awareness Day

Thursday, March 7, 2024
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

State House Building
11 South Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130

AUCA Board of Directors Meeting

Thursday, March 7, 2024
Montgomery, AL

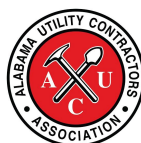
***AUCA 2024 Spring General Meeting,
Golf Tournament and Shrimp & Crawfish Boil***

Thursday, April 18, 2024
Arrowhead Country Club
Montgomery, AL



***AUCA 2024 Fall General Meeting
& Sporting Clay Shoot***

October 10, 2024
Lower Wetumpka Shotgun Sports Club
Montgomery, AL



News & Notes:

**ALABAMA UTILITY CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION
2024 LEADERSHIP TEAM**

The list of Officers and Directors below reflects the members elected to serve on the 2024 Leadership Team at the October 12, 2023 Fall General Meeting in Montgomery.

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT: JAY HOLCOMB, LAMBERT, INC.

1ST VICE PRESIDENT: RONNIE GOLDEN, CG JONES, LLC

2ND VICE PRESIDENT: GAVIN JONES, BAMA UTILITY CONTRACTORS, INC.

SECRETARY/TREASURER: ROBBIE BUTLER, CLEARY CONSTRUCTION, INC.

BOARD MEMBERS

RANDY BISHOP, CONSTRUCTION LABOR SERVICES, INC.

DOUG BLANKENSHIP, BLANKENSHIP CONTRACTING, INC. *

ANDRU BRAMBLETT, AFL

BILL CARTER, BILL CARTER CONSULTING, LLC

TIM GILLIAM, JOHN PLOTT COMPANY

SHAUN GONZALES, WEAVER ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMPANY, INC.

LARRY LOGSDON, WALLACE, JORDAN, RATLIFF, & BRANDT, LLC

MARK MAYFIELD, MILLER PIPELINE, LLC

RYAN McCLENDON, MARSHMcLENNAN AGENCY

BILL McGOUGH, W.R. MITCHELL CONTRACTOR, INC.

RICHARD MURPHREE, EMPIRE PIPE & SUPPLY

AARON SCHMIDT, SCHMIDT ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRUCTION, INC.

CHARLES SMITH, VULCAN MATERIALS COMPANY

CHAD TUBBS, FERGUSON WATERWORKS

STEVE WALKER, JOHNSON & ASSOCIATES, INC.

**IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT*



News & Notes:

AUCA 2024 Scholarship Program - Deadline is February 29th:

The application process for our 2024 Scholarship Program will close on February 29th, and applications will be reviewed at the March 7, 2024 AUCA Board of Directors Meeting.

- Scholarships awarded will be worth \$1,500 each.
- Money will be paid directly to the College or Trade School of the applicant's choice.
- Applications are available on the AUCA website:

<http://www.aluca.org/scholarship-program.html>

Application Criteria:

- Must be a resident of Alabama.
- Must be enrolling in, or attending a community college, technical school, or university in Alabama.
- Open to any field of study, but preference may be given to applicants enrolled/enrolling in an engineering or construction-related curriculum.
- Must be either employed by, or have a parent or grandparent employed by a current AUCA member company.
- Cannot have previously received an AUCA Scholarship.
- Application must be received by February 29, 2024.

2024 AUCA Membership Dues Renewal

January kicked off the 2024 AUCA membership renewal period. We are grateful to the companies that have quickly paid their 2024 AUCA dues. For those that have not yet renewed, please make arrangements to submit your payment to ensure no disruption in member benefits.

Should you have any questions, need another copy of the invoice sent to you, or wish to pay by credit card, please contact the AUCA office at (205) 582-9436.

OSHA Announces Penalty Increases for 2024

The U.S. Department of Labor has announced changes to Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) civil penalty amounts, effective January 16th.

The Department of Labor's OSHA said maximum penalties for serious and other-than-serious violations will increase from \$15,625 per violation to \$16,131 per violation. The maximum penalty for willful or repeated violations will increase from \$156,259 per violation to \$161,323 per violation. to \$156,259 per violation.



News & Notes:

Alabama 2024 Legislative Session Begins February 6th

The Alabama Legislative Session will convene in Montgomery on Tuesday, February 6th. As always, we will be tracking all legislation introduced that could be of interest to our members, and will have our Lobbyist, B.T. Crowe down in Montgomery to keep his finger on the pulse throughout the session.

If you have any questions or concerns involving any legislation, please contact us and let us know how we can help.

AUCA New Member Companies:

FirstBank

Birmingham, AL

Company Representatives: Trey Pollard, Ethan Howard, Charlie Davis

www.firstbankonline.com

A-Long Boring, Inc.

Fairhope, AL

Company Representative: Scot Williams

Contractor's Group Retirement Planning:

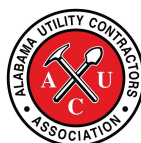
BenSource Employee Benefits, an AUCA member company, is staffed to take your call with any questions you may have about starting a retirement plan, or to compare your current plan with the ***Contractor's Retirement Plan***.



Here are just few of the unique benefits of this plan:

- Eliminates all TPA costs, all audit costs, 5500 costs and document costs
- Greatly reduces employee investment costs - the *power* of group buying
- Eliminates nearly all of the HR tasks typically associated with 401k
- Diverts the significant fiduciary liability away from the business owner

BenSource can be reached at (205) 536-9204 or online at www.bensource.com.



News & Notes:

AUCA 2024 Wall Calendars

Due to a shipping error, we received a small quantity of additional 2024 AUCA Calendars in late January. The new year is already well underway, but if you would still like to receive a 2024 calendar, please contact the AUCA office to claim yours while they are available.



Alabama Utility Contractors Association
We Dig Alabama
 Phone: (205) 582-9436 Fax: (205) 582-9155
www.aluca.org

JANUARY 2024

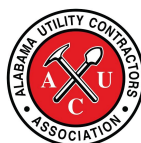
1 Total Days Elapsed in the Year
322 Total Days Remaining in the Year

223 Working Days Remaining in the Year (Excluding Saturdays and Sundays)
17 Working Days Remaining in the Year (Excluding Sundays)

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 <small>NEW YEAR'S DAY</small>	2	3 <small>THIRD QUARTER MOON</small>	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11 <small>NEW MOON</small>	12	13
14	15 <small>MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY</small>	16	17 <small>FIRST QUARTER MOON</small>	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25 <small>FULL MOON</small>	26	27
28	29	30	31			

2	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
S	S	S	S	S	S	S
M	M	M	M	M	M	M
T	T	T	T	T	T	T
W	W	W	W	W	W	W
T	T	T	T	T	T	T
F	F	F	F	F	F	F
S	S	S	S	S	S	S

4	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
S	S	S	S	S	S	S
M	M	M	M	M	M	M
T	T	T	T	T	T	T
W	W	W	W	W	W	W
T	T	T	T	T	T	T
F	F	F	F	F	F	F
S	S	S	S	S	S	S



News & Notes:

Alabama Underground Damage Prevention Authority (ALUDPA)

The Alabama Underground Damage Prevention Authority (ALUDPA) was established for the purpose of enforcing the Alabama Underground Damage Prevention State Law, for reviewing penalty provisions, and for reviewing the adequacy of the Alabama State Law Enforcement Program.



The Enforcement Program is a complaint-driven process where a complaint may be submitted against an entity for violation of the Alabama Underground Damage Prevention State Law. A complaint may be submitted as information only and not designated for enforcement penalties.

A complaint may be submitted using the Complaint Form [at this Website](#) no later than 30 days after the occurrence of an alleged violation. The submitted Complaint Form is reviewed by the ALUDPA for determination of an alleged violation and for penalty provisions that may apply. The reported violator is then notified by the ALUDPA that a response may be submitted using the Response Form at this Website no later than 14 days after the ALUDPA notification.

A GUIDE TO ALABAMA'S

Enforcement Process

HOW TO SUBMIT AND RESPOND TO COMPLAINTS
AT WWW.ALUDPA.ORG

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5
Report any violations within 30 days of incident. Can be reported for info only or enforcement purposes.	Alleged violator will be notified with time/date/location of incident. Alleged violator has 14 days to respond.	Exec. Committee reviews the complaint/response. Then makes a recommendation.	Exec. Committee notifies the alleged violator and complainant of any penalty action recommended.	Alleged violator can accept and pay the penalty, or submit an appeal to be heard by entire Damage Prevention Authority

Clean Water Construction Coalition Report

From Ryan Sharpe - Chairman CWCC & Sante Esposito - Key Advocates

January 2024 Insights

NOTE: Congress in recess until January 8.

FY24 Appropriations Bills Generally: January 19 and February 9 Deadlines

Currently, the FY24 appropriation bills are being considered under a two-step, two-deadline process per the most recent Continuing Resolution. That Resolution extended funding until January 19 for 4 appropriations bills – Military Construction, Veterans, Transportation/Housing and Energy and Water (funds WIIN grants). The remaining bills (including the Interior Appropriations bill which funds the SRF's) would be funded until February 2. At this time, there appears no political appetite for extending either deadline. In addition, it is not clear, if agreement is reached on these bills, whether they would be considered on the Floor individually (the House Republican preference) or via minibuses (the Senate preference).

To date, in the House, seven bills have passed, including the Energy and Water (WIIN grants) and Interior (the SRF's and related earmarks) bills, all at the FY22 funding level, three bills are pending, and two bills (Ag and Commerce) were defeated. In the Senate, all twelve appropriations bills have been approved at the FY23 level by the Appropriations Committee on a bipartisan basis with the Agriculture, Military/Veterans and Transportation bills all having passed as a minibus.

FY24 Energy and Water Appropriation Bills: WIIN Grant Funding

Both the House-passed and Senate-reported Energy and Water Appropriations bills (H.R. 4394 and S.2443 respectively) provide \$30M for Title XVI of which \$20M is for WIIN grants. Given that, there should be no issue in the current conference. The President's FY 24 Budget proposed \$4M for Title XVI, the same as the FY23 Biden Budget.

FY24 Interior Appropriation Bills: SRF Funding

Clean Water SRF - the House-passed Interior Appropriations bill (H.R. 4821) provides \$1.005B - a general fund base allotment of \$535M and earmarks of \$470M. The Senate-reported Interior Appropriations bill (S.2605) provides \$1.639B - a general fund base allotment of \$1.294B and earmarks of \$345M. The President's FY 24 Budget proposed \$1.639B. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), which was not changed by either bill, provides an additional \$2.628B for the CWSRF. NOTE: the BIL provided funding for FY22-26 – it would be up for reauthorization by the end of FY26.

Safe Drinking Water SRF - the House-passed Interior Appropriations bill provides \$870.6M - a general fund base allotment of \$460.6M and earmarks of \$410.3M. The Senate-reported Interior Appropriations bill provides \$1.126B - a general fund base allotment of \$882M and earmarks of \$243.6M. The BIL, which was not changed by either bill, provides an additional \$3.000B for the SDWSRF. For the SDWSRF, the President's FY 24 Budget proposed \$1.126B.

As negotiations are underway between House and Senate Appropriations Committees, we continue

Clean Water Construction Coalition Report

(Continued from page 9)

to engage House and Senate Appropriations Committee Members and staff, primarily Democrats, in strong support of at least the FY24 Clean Water SRF baseline funding level in the Senate-reported bill, strong opposition to the baseline funding level in the House-passed bill, and at least \$20M for WIIN grants.

Earmark Funding: Generally

We continue to pursue discussions with the Hill and SRF stakeholders regarding appropriations for SRF baseline funding and related earmarks. For FY 22 and 23 (and now for FY24), earmark funding was a takedown from the SRF base allotments and not from a separate earmark funding account. As a result, the base allotments were adversely impacted. The Coalition's position is that continuance of that approach is a real problem and counter to the goal of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law which was to increase SRF spending over and above increases in the traditional appropriations process and not in lieu of reductions by that process.

Earmark Funding Specifically: FY24 SRF's

As part of the SRF funding lobbying effort, we also continue to support, as the maximum, the earmark funding level in the Senate bill and oppose the higher level in the House bill. We have also express strong opposition to combining the earmark funding levels which impacts adversely the baseline funding even more so.

Clean Water SRF – the House-passed Interior Appropriations bill provides \$470M for earmarks. The Senate-reported Interior Appropriations bill provides \$345M for earmarks.

Safe Drinking Water SRF - the House Interior Appropriations bill provides \$410M for earmarks. The Senate Interior Appropriations bill provides \$244M for earmarks.

For both SRF's, the President's FY 24 Budget rejected earmarks as a takedown from the basic SRF allotment funding.

Senator Padilla Staff Meeting Request

Have a zoom meeting request pending with Senator Padilla's office (Angela Eibner on the SRF's and Sarah Swig on WIIN grants) to discuss an arrangement for the Senator to champion our causes including the

STREAM Act. STREAM Act (S.2162) Update

Pending the Padilla staff meeting, we reached out to the offices of Senators Sinema and Kelly, co-sponsors of the bill, to express our support for the bill and to urge action on it.

To review, the bill was introduced on June 22 by Senator Feinstein with Senators Sinema (I-AZ) and



Clean Water Construction Coalition Report

(Continued from page 10)

Kelly (D-AZ)) as cosponsors. On July 19, a hearing was held on the bill by the Subcommittee on Water and Power of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. On May 24, at the request of staff of Senator Feinstein, the Coalition sent a letter of support for the bill regarding its plan introduction. The bill is basically the same bill the Senator introduced last Congress and includes the following: \$300M over five years for water recycling, \$750M for surface and groundwater storage and conveyance projects, \$150M for desalination projects, \$100M for projects to provide drinking water for disadvantaged communities, and \$250M for environmental restoration projects. The Napolitano office said that they are monitoring action on the bill to decide next steps.

FY24 House Republican Congressional Budget Resolution and FY25 President's Budget

Next steps still unclear. Accompanying report of House resolution still not filed. No concurrent resolution number. House passage was expected in the past few weeks but did not materialize. No Senate action to date. Action may be overtaken by what happens with the appropriations bills.

Highlights of the House Republican budget resolution -

- FY24 discretionary spending at the FY22 level of \$1.47T;
- Spending to grow by only 1 percent a year;
- Overall, discretionary spending to come down by \$4.6T over a decade;
- Deficits to be reduced by \$16.3T over a decade; and,
- A surplus of \$130B at the end of ten years.

The President's Budget, by law, is to be submitted to Congress on the first Monday in February – this year, February 5. That deadline is often missed. For example, last year the Budget was submitted on March 9. Influencing/lobbying the Executive budget process is difficult at best – lobbying almost non-existent. The process begins almost a year in advance with internal agency discussions/formulations extending from February to September, followed by agency presentations to OMB in September, pass-back by OMB in October, final joint agency-OMB review in November, last minute action in December, and print in January for submission in February.

Issues/Bills of Interest

Continue to advocate for these for any possible consideration opportunities. Alternative Water Source Program Funding – authorized at \$125M in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law but not funded. Included the language the Coalition requested that makes USBR recycled water projects that have not received construction funds eligible to apply for AWSP grants.

Mega Recycled Water Project Funding – continue to pursue funding for mega recycled water projects over and above the \$450M provided in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Other Items of Interest - if there is an effort to pursue non-controversial infrastructure items, advocate for programs of interest such as those included in the House-passed "Build Back Better" bill including \$100M for large scale water recycling projects and \$125M for Alternative Water Source Program grants.



Fleet Safety:

Provided by Marsh McLennan Agency - Southeast Risk Control Services

Safe Winter Driving

Driving conditions in the winter months can be full of treacherous hazards including, winter ice, poor visibility, strong winds, snow, rain, and more, especially in northern regions that get a lot of snow and ice. Additional preparations can help make a trip safer or help motorists deal with an emergency.

1. Black Ice

Perhaps the deadliest danger of all is “black ice.” Black ice forms on a roadway, usually due to snow melting and re-freezing. Since it is almost invisible, drivers fail to recognize black ice conditions and may drive at normal speeds—often resulting in very serious accidents. Always be alert to the possibility of black ice when temperatures are near or below freezing. Pavement that looks dry but may be darker in color and dull looking should alert you to the presence of black ice.

2. Wait out the Storm

Wait out bad weather. Strong icy winds in combination with snow or dust can make it impossible to see where you are driving—or walking. Under these conditions it is usually safest to stay with your vehicle and wait out the storm.

3. Leave Earlier

Allow enough time to get to your destination. Rushing in difficult driving conditions can lead to an accident. Turn your radio on to listen to the road report and weather forecast. Leave a few minutes earlier in the morning and allow plenty of time to get to work. Buckle up your seat belt or safety restraint before you start driving.

4. Stay Alert

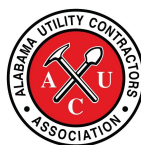
Don't drive when you are under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or certain medications. Read the labels of prescription drugs and over-the-counter medicines to determine if they can cause drowsiness. Driving demands your full attention.

5. Stay Calm

Sometimes other drivers will become frustrated with slow-moving traffic. Keep your temper and don't let other drivers aggravate you. Maintain a safe speed and drive defensively.

6. Maintain a Space Cushion

Keep a safe distance between you and other vehicles. The “two second rule” works well on dry roads and in ideal conditions, but in winter you should extend it to four seconds. Watch the vehicle directly ahead of you. As it passes a stationary object start counting – “one thousand and one”, “one thousand and two”, and so on. Your vehicle should not pass the same object until you say “four”.



Fleet Safety:

(Continued from page 12)

7. Maintain Your Vehicle

Keep your car well-maintained and in good working order. This includes having good tread on your tires, the engine tuned-up for winter, and all lights functioning properly. In colder climates, you may need to add anti-freeze to the radiator. In some areas, gasoline antifreeze may be required. Clean your windows and headlights frequently. Keep your windshield washer fluid topped up. Good visibility is essential to safe driving. Clean your windows and headlights of ice or snow before starting out and repeat frequently throughout your trip.

8. Prepare for Winter Driving

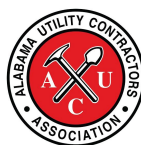
When getting ready for winter driving, it's best to prep your vehicle ahead of time so you can drive safely. This means completing your vehicle maintenance before you head out. Check out our maintenance and repair pricing tool and Service and Repair Guide to help determine the cost. Among the car preparations to take:

- Pack a winter survival kit. (See Below)
- Install winter tires.
- Replace windshield wiper blades.
- Fill up windshield wiper fluid and keep an extra gallon in the vehicle.
- Check tire pressure and tire tread to avoid blowouts.
- Keep the gas tank at least half-full at all times to avoid freezing fuel lines.
- Keep your vehicle washed to avoid salt corrosion.

9. Pack a Winter Car Kit

A well-stocked cold-weather car kit can make emergency situations less stressful. Keep your supplies organized and easily accessible in your vehicle in case of a severe weather event that leaves you stranded. Everyone will have different needs, but consider including items like these:

- Antifreeze— Keep your fluid levels full to help regulate your car's temperature.
- Blankets— Keeping warm is essential if your car's heating system fails.
- Duct tape— This can help patch and temporarily repair various issues.
- Extra clothes— a change of clothes and sturdy boots may come in handy.
- First-aid supplies— Don't forget bandages, gauze, skin ointments, etc.
- Flashlights, LED road flares— Don't forget the extra batteries.
- Gloves— Protect your hands from the elements when you're stranded.
- Ice scraper— Use this to clear the windshield and windows of snow and ice.
- Microfiber cloths— Have cloths or absorbent towels for cleanup as needed.
- Portable phone charger—always have a way to power up your mobile device.
- Shovel— Use a small shovel to clear a path and help dig out of mushy ditches.
- Snacks— Have small food items stocked to keep hunger at bay while waiting for help.
- Snow brush— To make sure your view of the road is unobstructed.



Fleet Safety:

(Continued from page 13)

- Tire pressure gauge– Cold weather can adversely affect your tire pressure.
- Tool kit– Packing a tool kit ensures you can always change a bolt or troubleshoot when needed.
- Water– Have bottled water on hand for drinking and other purposes in and around the vehicle.

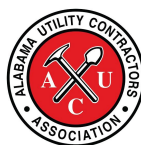
For severe weather, consider adding:

- Fire extinguisher
- Portable jump starter/air compressor unit
- Sand or kitty litter for traction
- Snow chains or other traction devices

Source: <https://safetymattersweekly.com/weekly-safety-meeting-safe-winter-driving/>



January 28th marks the 10 year anniversary of the infamous “Snowmageddon” when parts of Alabama were paralyzed by a round of winter precipitation that turned roadways and interstates into ice rinks, stranding many in their cars in freezing temperatures. The above picture is from the neighborhood entrance of AUCA Director Tim Ayers on that memorable day in 2014.



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**AUCA IS A MEMBER-DRIVEN, NEEDS
FOCUSED TRADE ASSOCIATION CREATED
SOLELY TO PROMOTE AND ADVANCE THE
UTILITY INDUSTRY IN THE STATE OF
ALABAMA.**

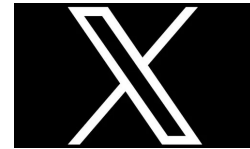
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www.aluca.org**

**Please print out this newsletter to share with
others in your company. And, if you are
receiving this for the company owner,
please print out a copy for him/her.**

**Let AUCA Be Your Source For All Your
Training Needs**

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