Foundation Sector Grounded in Optimism for New Year

By Larry Kahaner

(...) 

On the testing side of the foundations sector, Senior Consulting Engineer, Marketing Director Gina Beim of Pile Dynamics, Inc. (www.pile.com) of Cleveland, Ohio, says that her company has witnessed an ‘explosion’ of popularity of the Thermal Integrity Profile (TIP). "The interest in evaluating the shape of drilled foundations using TIP with either data collection method – thermal probes or thermal wire cables – is increasing, and the industry recognizes that. The TIP received two innovation awards in 2013 – one from the Deep Foundations institute and the prestigious NOVA Award for Innovation from CURT/CIF (Construction Innovation Forum). In 2013 some testers branched out to try the thermal profiling on jet grouting columns, soil nails and micropiles. It’s exciting to see these new applications tried out, and PDI thinks most of them will open new markets for the TIP.”

The company also increased the number of options available for its Pile Integrity Tester. “That’s PDI’s instrument for pulse echo testing of concrete foundations. The PIT, as it’s known, now comes in two sizes (some people favor a compact size, others prefer a larger screen to visualize results), with either wireless or traditional (cabled) sensors, and with either one or two channels of data acquisition.”

PDI hasn’t stopped there, Beim says. “We have developed another device, an instrument for independent inspectors of ACIP / CFA piling jobs. It streamlines and standardizes the entire process of recording the installation, something that inspectors still tend to do with pencil and paper. PDI will start marketing it to inspectors soon,” she says. Speaking about 2014, Beim predicts that the U.S. market will remain steady. “Outside the U.S., some countries are seeing increased interest in foundation quality control, either just as a natural evolution of construction practices or because new codes have been enacted that require or incentivize deep foundation testing. One example is Sweden, which now requires pile driving monitoring in virtually all construction sites. Brazil requires a significant amount of pile load testing, too. PDI’s representatives are, therefore, cautiously optimistic,” says Beim.