

Heads-up Rod Level by SECO

In late 1999 the folks from SECO were clearing out some old imported auto-levels that had been a total disaster due to poor compensator design and manufacturing. But all was not lost. One of the cool features on the auto-level was a circular bubble that was viewed by looking straight into the bubble from the side rather than from above (perhaps an original design from a Kern instrument). Project Manager (and self-avowed pack rat) Mike Copeland hated to have to throw away the useful bubble assemblies, so he stripped them out and set them aside. Some time later he picked up one of the assemblies (second from left below), and when holding it in a comfortable upright position, an idea sparked—the assembly could be used on a survey rod! It didn't take long to work up a sketch and meet with SECO's machinists to make a prototype.

Heads Up!

Not only would the newly-designed survey rod be more comfortable for the user, but a new safety feature was gained as well: the rod person would no longer have to look down as traffic whizzed by. This, in turn, would also benefit the instrument operator, who wouldn't have to wait for the rod person to look up in order to send a signal.

The rest is history. The Heads Up Rod Level has now been on the market for eight years—and is available in several different form factors—but there are still many surveyors out there who are not aware of it. Copeland and his longtime colleague at SECO, Rusty Hartland, always enjoy demonstrating the level at trade shows due to the interest and excitement it generates. They also like hearing the stories surveyors tell about things that happened to them while looking down at bubbles.

So fellow pack rats, take heart! The makings of the world's next great gadget may be just a shelf away. *AS*

