



Metropolitan Washington Association of Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors

Newsleak

Message from the President — Bill Royston

Calendar of Events

- April 3 - Meeting
 - ⇒ 5:00 - Board Meeting
 - ⇒ 6:00 - T-4 Training : Hydronic Design
 - ⇒ 7:30 - Dinner and General Meeting
- May 1 - Meeting

As I am writing this message, we are preparing for yet another winter storm. This has been a long, cold winter. Good for the heating business, but now I am ready to move on to warmer weather and switch gears to air conditioning. Snow storms and other obstacles that are beyond our control are good examples of dealing with annoying stumbling blocks. Every business experiences unexpected problems or events that are beyond their control but its' how you deal with them that is the real sign of how successful your company will be.

I started many years ago in this industry working for other companies and I learned a lot about how to successfully handle difficult hurdles. I learned from people who were experienced and shared their expertise with me. That is what I see as one of the main benefits of being a Metro Washington PHCC

member. I know that there are many benefits to membership such as webinars, discounts on products, legislative network, etc. but I believe the majority of our chapters' membership would say that their biggest benefit is what they learn at our monthly meetings and the relationships they've built with other members of the chapter. Every month, we have top professionals from our industry providing training, attending our meeting and offering the latest news in code enforcement, rebate programs, employee issues, etc. This is the kind of benefit you can't quantify, you just have to show up to reap the rewards and you'll see exactly what I mean.

If you haven't been attending, please be sure to make our April 3rd and May 1st meetings before we break for summer. Not only will you learn something that you can use in the future but you may have just the

information to share to help someone else.

MWPHCC isn't strictly business with just meetings and trainings. We also like to have a good time. We are continuing to take registrations for our fishing trip on Friday, April 25, 2014. I hope you will join us for the trip. I went for the first time last year and had a great time. I also caught the biggest fish, something I hope to do again this year. If you haven't signed up yet, please contact Susan at susan@mwphcc.org or go to our website at www.mwphcc.org and register.



If you have any ideas, suggestions or questions you can always feel free to contact me at 301-808-6800.

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April Meeting Sponsored by Cummins-Wagner and Bell & Gossett

We hope that you will join us for the MWPHCC April meeting on Thursday, April 3, 2014 sponsored by Cummins-Wagner Co and Bell and Gossett.

At 6:00 pm, Jack Guilfoyle of Cummins-Wagner will present our T-4 Training: "Using Dynamic Pressure Gradients in Hydronic Design and Troubleshooting," at the Holiday Inn in College Park, MD. They will be discussing and explaining how to visualize dynamic pressure distribution in hydronic systems to improve new system

designs and identify problems in existing systems.

Our General Meeting and dinner will immediately follow at 7:30 pm.

Cummins-Wagner Co. is a distributor for industrial and mechanical equipment covering the mid-Atlantic states. They serve Maryland, Virginia, Washington, DC, Delaware, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania with the leading brands of compressors, pumps, and heat transfer equipment, and offer support services such as system design,

assembly and aftermarket service and repair.

Headquartered in Annapolis Junction, Maryland with branches in Pennsylvania and Virginia, Cummins-Wagner acquired Siewart Equipment and Siewart Classic in 2008, expanding their reach to include markets in New York State and Florida. Cummins-Wagner is a 100% employee-owned company.

Be sure to join us for the April meeting and see how the great people at Cummins-Wagner can help

“The industry has been advising installers to practice with the new materials to gain confidence in specific techniques; helpful tips are available here.”

Helpful Hints for Soldering New Lead Free Brass

Following enactment of amendments to the Reduction of Lead in Drinking Water Act in effect since January 1, 2014, new brass alloys have been introduced that comply with the new definition of Lead Free. Some contractors have been reporting difficulty soldering these new alloys, finding poor coverage when joints are broken apart. The industry has been advising installers to practice with the new materials to gain confidence in specific techniques; helpful tips are available here.

Having Trouble Soldering No-Lead Brass?

Practice your technique using these helpful hints:

- Joints need to be carefully cleaned and free of oils.
- Work with vendors to find the flux material that works best in the application; some fluxes have better performance with the new brass alloys.

- Apply the heat slowly and evenly around the pipe and then the fitting, being sure to apply the heat by moving the torch around the fitting, not simply heating in one location.
- Allow additional time for the joint to cool before moving; the new alloys take longer to heat and will take longer to cool, factors that can affect success.

For additional information:

www.gettheleadoutplumbing.com including additional links to manufacturers' training information. It is important to adapt installation practices to comply with this health-related revision in the law.

For Additional Help

Download this helpful PDF on the Recommended Practice for Soldering of No-Lead Copper Alloys at <http://www.phccweb.org/files/PDFs/>

RecommendedPracticesNoLead-SolderingAlloys.pdf

PHCC members can register for the April 23 webinar: [Soldering New Lead Free Products – Debunking the Myths](#)

This webinar will cover the following:

Are you and your techs having problems soldering the new no lead copper alloys or finding poor coverage when joints are broken? There are quite a few misconceptions and myths related to why installers are having difficulty soldering the new lead free products. This webinar will clear up any myths you've heard. You'll learn the proper installation practices to get consistent high quality soldered joints for lead free pipes, valves and fixtures.

Speaker: Dale L. Powell, Project Manager and Piping Applications Specialist for Copper Development Association Inc. (CDA).

PHCC Wrote the Book: The National Standard Plumbing Code

PHCC wrote the book. Since first publishing a Standard Plumbing code in 1933, PHCC has been maintaining what is known today as the National Standard Plumbing Code (NSPC) on an annual basis. Designed to ensure the proper installation of plumbing systems, the NSPC provides local and state governments, code administrative bodies, and industry with a modern code to protect public health and safety.

To keep the code current and viable and with input from all interested parties, the NSPC Committee — comprised of licensed contractors,

engineers, and inspectors — reviews the code annually and updates it on a three-year cycle and conducts a mid-cycle review to produce a supplement.

Order the NSPC Now! Available in print or on CD, the National Standard Plumbing Code— Illustrated is published every three years, with supplements added after each annual revision cycle.

Proposed Changes. Proposed changes may be submitted for approval until the date noted on the form for each year. Changes are considered, discussed, and voted on at a public hearing. A two

-thirds vote is required to accept a proposed change. There are no fees required for submission or approval. **Deadline: April 30, 2014.**

2013 National Standard Plumbing Code Supplement Now Available

The 2013 Supplement to the 2012 National Standard Plumbing Code is now available at the PHCC Store.

This Supplement has been developed to update the Code.

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Small Business Tax Tips from the Small Business Administration

Get Ready - It's Tax Season!

By Calvin W. Goings
Regional Administrator



“Proper record-keeping year-round is the first step to ensure taxes are filed accurately.”

After settling down after the busy holiday season, another season will soon be here - tax season!

As a small business owner, it is important to understand how taxes will affect your business, how to file properly, avoid audits and claim the right tax deductions.

Here are 5 tips to ease the burden of tax preparation and help in preparation for the April 15, 2014 deadline.

1. Keep Good Records and Understand Available Deductions

Proper record-keeping year-round is the first step to ensure taxes are filed accurately. Save essential paperwork that could be needed to back-up deduction claims, should there be an audit. Keep it in mind that tax credits and deductions change each year.

2. Utilize the Small Business Jobs Act Tax Provisions

The Small Business Jobs Act of 2010, signed into law by President

Obama, has over 17 tax provisions to decrease tax burdens for small businesses—several of these provisions can be taken advantage of during this year's tax season. Utilizing these provisions could provide great savings for your business.

3. Remember the tax credits within the Affordable Care Act

These tax credits will allow small businesses to cover up to 35 percent of the health care premiums a small business pays to cover its workers. In 2014, the tax credit will increase to 50 percent.

4. Avoid Common Audit Traps

It is very important to be aware of potential red flags which could include:

- Classifying Employees as Independent Contractors – Independent contractors and employees are not the same and it is important to understand the difference. In the eyes of the IRS, misclassification can be seen as an attempt to avoid payroll taxes; non-compliance can

bring penalties and back taxes.

- Home Office Deduction – This deduction is very specific and not all home-based businesses qualify. Know how to determine if you are eligible to claim this deduction and what specific expenses may be deducted.

- Large Sum Miscellaneous Deductions – If you claim a large amount of itemized deductions or miscellaneous expenses, relative to your income, the IRS could get suspicious. Be specific and label every deduction.

5. Keep Business and Personal Expenses Separate – The IRS scrutinizes personal expenses that may have been claimed as a business expense, such as the use of a business vehicle, for personal use. Maintain separate bank and credit card accounts for your business and personal use. Be diligent about keeping good records. For additional information on these tax tips and current year tax deductions contact the IRS at www.irs.gov.



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Collection Strategies: What Works to Get You Paid by Scott Wolfe

What is the biggest challenge in the construction industry? Many would answer "getting paid."

Getting paid in the construction business is an art. The industry suffers from the nation's highest failure rates, works on the lowest net-profit margins and generally must deal with daily work and billing complexities that results in delays, misapplication of funds and a struggling bottom line.

What works and doesn't work to get a company paid? This article will address effective collection strategies in the construction industry that work and can significantly improve your company's cash flow.

Strategy 1: Have a collection strategy

The first and most effective collections strategy is to have a strategy and follow it.

Few people like collecting debts, and the simple truth is that most businesses push off the collections process at all costs. When an account ages, they put it at the end of a to-do list. While they may send a random email here or there, there is a lack of consistent follow-up. This behavior is toxic to having success at collecting unpaid debts.

Lacking a consistent follow-up and collections plan demonstrates to your customer that your company isn't serious about collecting the debt. Further, it results in delay, such that the unpaid account ages (fast), and suddenly you're left with a debt so old it's virtually uncollectable.

Successful companies create collection and credit policies before they ever run into a payment problem. These policies specifically outline the steps a company will take when faced with an aging debt. The policies are very tactical. For example:

1. When a debt is 10 days overdue, a reminder invoice is sent and a reminder phone call is placed.
2. When a debt is 20 days overdue, a reminder notification is sent, identifying the late-payment penalties or terms.

When a debt is 30 days overdue, a formal demand for payment on company letterhead is sent, and a notice of intent of lien is sent.

1. When a debt is 45 days overdue, a formal demand for payment is sent from a collections agency letterhead, and a lien is filed.

2. When a debt is ... etc.

As you can see, these policies are very specific.

Spend a few moments to jot down a possible collections policy. Then formalize it and train your accounting staff. Then follow it — to the letter.

Strategy 2: Preliminary notices and lien rights are important

Construction business coach George Hedley recently wrote an article in Independent Electrical Contractors' Insights Magazine titled "How To Get Paid Faster!" The first thing on his checklist for faster payments is "[a]lways send preliminary lien notices." I strongly agree.

Chasing payments is not a new problem in the construction industry. The problem existed even more than 200 years ago when our nation was founded. Thomas Jefferson recognized the industry's cash problems and introduced the first mechanics lien legislation to protect those furnishing labor or materials to a project.

Mechanics lien legislation now exists in every state, and each state specifically provides that the laws are in place to protect you against nonpayment. It's smart business, and it's the best collections strategy you can have.

First, by sending preliminary notices and protecting your mechanics lien and bond claim rights, you'll notice that your invoices get paid more often and faster. That's because sending a preliminary notice actually prioritizes your debt with the property owner and the general contractor.

Second, when an account does slip through the cracks and you go unpaid, filing a mechanics lien is the fastest and most effective way to grab people's attention on the project and assert leverage to get your debt paid.

If you're scared that asserting your lien rights will jeopardize relationships with your customers, shake it off. This fear is a myth. Millions of preliminary notices are sent every month across the country.

Don't be afraid of your own rights — those

rights are there for you, everyone else is using them, and it could be the collections solution you've been looking for.

Strategy 3: Collection agencies

Collection agencies are hit-and-miss. When you get a great collections agency, you'll never question the industry again, but it's obvious that there are bad apples out there and the industry is broken.

Nevertheless, the alternative is getting a lawyer and getting involved with litigation. Unfortunately — and I say this as a licensed attorney — the legal system is even more broken.

So when you're at the end of your rope internally in trying to collect a debt, it's worth it to find a collections agency who can give it a shot. Especially if you have filed a mechanics lien or bond claim, because this makes the debt a lot more collectable through the agency.

Here are a few tips to deal with collection agencies successfully:

- Investigate heavily. Find a collection agency that is transparent about who they are (no stock photos on their website), and that looks like they are doing business like other businesses. These collection agencies "get it."
 - Make the agency prove their credentials to you. Every agency says they are licensed and insured. Every one of them. Make them prove it. Get a copy of their insurance declaration page and licensing information, and actually call and check on them to make sure the documents are legitimate.
 - Get references. Actually call them.
 - Let them test one account before you send them a ton, and don't make it your most ridiculous and difficult one. Further, don't judge the agency by the success of that one account. Judge the agency by their contacts with you, professionalism and overall work product. They won't be able to collect them all.
- Searching for and doing due diligence on a collection agency should be a long and tough task. Nevertheless, once you find a good one, they will become a huge asset to your company. When the collections legwork in-house doesn't do the trick, ship it elsewhere to escalate the claim.



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Settlement Motion Filed on Furnace Rule



“The newly established energy efficiency standards for non-weatherized residential gas furnaces in the Northern Region are to be set aside; the existing efficiency standards to remain in effect.”

The U.S. Dept. of Energy’s (DOE) Final Furnace, Air Conditioning, and Heat Pump Rule has been working its way through a long court process. On Tuesday, March 11th, a joint settlement motion was filed with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. If approved by the court, this will start a reworking process for gas furnace portions of the proposal and modify parts of the air conditioning and heat pump portion. PHCC will update this information once the court has ruled on the settlement motion.

The original Final Furnace Rule proposal established regional standards for furnaces, air conditioners, and heat pumps which were viewed as problematic by some industry stakeholders. A settlement agreement was developed which would allow industry stakeholders to contribute to a restarted rulemaking process. The original non-weatherized gas furnace portion would be set aside while the split system air conditioning portion would maintain a Jan. 1, 2015, implementation. The agreement would allow a sell-through period to help with inventory allocation of central air conditioning products manufactured before Jan. 1, 2015. These products could be installed until July 1, 2016.

Additionally, DOE also would agree not to assert civil penalty authority for violation of the regional standard for central air conditioners over parties that are distributors. DOE further agrees to review the Direct Final Rule process and to commence a notice and comment rulemaking proceeding to clarify its process related to direct final rules

(DFRs) by publishing a request for information (RFI) in the

Federal Register on that topic within 180 days after a judgment by the D.C. Circuit implementing this agreement.

The main parts of the pending agreement are:

1. The newly established energy efficiency standards for non-weatherized residential gas furnaces in the Northern Region are to be set aside; the existing efficiency standards to remain in effect. The DOE would agree to restart the Direct Final Rule process with industry stakeholder input to the new regulation. This process would begin soon after the expected U.S. District Court approval of the agreement. The usual time frame for this process would imply implementation of new efficiency standards for non-weatherized residential gas furnaces about years 2021 – 2022.
2. Other requirements of the original Direct Final Rule will take effect as scheduled Jan. 1, 2015. Central air conditioners in the South will be minimum 14-SEER while in the Southwest the minimum standard will be 14-SEER with a 12.2 EER (for 1 to 3.5 tons) and 11.7 EER (for 4 and 5 tons) with the additional provision for a sell through period.
3. Distributors (including retailers and installers) in the South and Southwest will have until July 1, 2016 to sell any inventory of 13-SEER central air conditioning equipment manufactured before Jan. 1, 2015.
4. DOE has agreed not to assess civil penalty upon distributors (not including retailers and installers) for violations related to the enforcement of regional efficiency standards for central air-conditioners.
5. DOE intends to develop an effective enforcement framework for regional standards in the context of a negotiated rulemaking by making a recommendation that the Appliance Standards and Rulemaking Federal Advisory Committee establishes a working group for that purpose. DOE intends to make such a recommendation within 90 days after a judgment by this Court resolving the litigation
 - DOE further agrees to review the Direct Final Rule process and to commence a notice and comment rulemaking proceeding to clarify its process related to direct final rules (DFRs) by publishing a request for information (RFI) in the Federal Register on that topic within 180 days after a judgment by the D.C. Circuit implementing this agreement.

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