



Metropolitan Washington Association of Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors

# Newsleak

## Message from the President — Bill Royston



Happy New Year! I want to wish all of our members and their families a very happy, healthy and prosperous New Year. I think this is going to be another great year for the MWPHCC and I look forward to serving a second year as association President.

We held a very successful training and meeting in December. Thank you to D & B Distributing for sponsoring our December meeting and continuing this holiday tradition. Also at our December meeting, we collected toys and monetary donations for the Toys for Tots program. I want to thank everyone who participated in this important charity. We had a record number of toys collected for our areas neediest children.

At our meetings during 2013 we made it a priority to spread the word about important changes in the trade. At December's meeting

we specifically addressed the recent code changes for external chimney venting and the upcoming changes in 2015 to water heaters. We are working to have a representative from WSSC at a future meeting to talk more about the chimney venting. In respect to the water heater changes effective April 2015, Department of Energy (DOE) is for the first time mandating a different criteria for rated storage capacities over 55 gallons, for both gas and electric products. This substantial increase in efficiency requires these higher capacity models employ new technologies. Gas models larger than 55 gallon must be condensing type products, while electric models larger than 55 gallon must employ heat pump technology to achieve the higher required efficiency levels. This new technology will greatly increase the base price of a water heater. Therefore, we need to be as

informed as possible so we can adequately explain these changes and additional costs to our customers.

Stay tuned for more information, we'll be continuing to discuss these issues at our meetings, in our newsletter and through emails. Our industry is constantly changing and evolving. If we don't stay on top of the new information and evolve with the industry, we'll be unable to continue to do business as usual. I like to think of it as a football analogy, these new requirements are game changers. We can't continue to use the same playbook if we want to get top results for our business.

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

## January Meeting Sponsored by Taze & Hewitt/Weil McLain

Kick off 2014 and join us for the January Meeting on Thursday, January 9<sup>th</sup> 2014 and ring in the New Year with our meeting sponsor Taze & Hewitt and Weil-McLain! Michael Kaiser, Training & Technical Manager with Weil-McLain will be providing the T-4 Training on Boiler Troubleshooting and Basic Maintenance Review. In addition, Weil-McLain will be providing a brief over-view of their residential and commercial product line. The training will

begin at 6:00pm followed by our general meeting and complimentary dinner.

Taze & Hewitt has been providing the highest quality products and services to plumbers, contractors and distributors in the area for over 60 years! From boilers to drains and everything in between, Taze & Hewitt is proud to represent many of the largest and well respected lines in the hydronic, plumbing and HVAC industry.

Weil-McLain, founded in 1881, is a leading designer and manufacturer of heating equipment in the residential and commercial market. Headquartered in Michigan City, Indiana and facilities in Eden, North Carolina, Weil-McLain has grown to be one of largest US manufacturers of boilers and hydronic equipment.

Please join us for our first meeting of 2014 with Taze & Hewitt and Weil-McLain!

### Calendar of Events

- January 9\*\* - Meeting

\*\*Note: This is the 2nd Thursday of the month

- ⇒ 5:00 - Board Meeting
- ⇒ 6:00 - T-4 Training : Troubleshooting Boilers
- ⇒ 7:30 - Dinner and General Meeting

- February 6 - Meeting

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## MWPHCC December 2013 Meeting



If you didn't attend our year-end meeting, you really missed out. This year's December meeting was a huge success and filled with holiday cheer. We had great attendance and we hope that our members will continue to participate strongly in 2014.

Continuing with our December tradition, we held a toy drive for the U.S. Marine Corps Toys for Tots Program. We collected a record amount of toys and a very generous \$804 of donations. A US Marine was in attendance at the meeting to receive the donations and we honored him at the meeting for his service to our country. They were very appreciative of the donations knowing that this has been a hard year for many. This was sure to make many children's Christmas brighter.

We want to extend a special thank you to D & B Distributing for providing a great training session on Trouble Shooting Residential Water Heaters and a wonderful holiday

dinner. D & B has been sponsoring our December meeting for many years and we appreciate their ongoing support to our association.

During our general meeting we voted for our new slate of Officers and Board of Directors.

The Metro Washington PHCC would like to present our 2014 Officers & Board of Directors.

### OFFICERS:

- President:** Bill Royston
- 1st Vice Pres:** Charlie Perkins
- 2nd Vice Pres:** Al Luke
- Treasurer:** Mark Crooks
- Secretary:** Buck Hudson
- Sergeant at Arms:** John Barry
- Past President:** Buckey Davis
- Auxiliary:** Marcia Shapiro

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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- GG Davis
- Jonathan Lang
- John Jacobs
- Gary Markle
- Dick Rhodes

The officers and directors will be installed at the January meeting.

We are happy to welcome back a member to our Board of Directors: GG Davis of Washington Gas. Thank you for your willingness to join the Board and help with the association. We know that you will help make 2014 a great year for the association!



MWPHCC Executive Director, Susan Northcutt and MWPHCC President, Bill Royston presenting donations to the US Marine representative from the Toys for Tots Program. The association collected a record number of toys and over \$800 in donations for this annual tradition.



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## DC Plumbing & Gas Fitters Bond Renewal



The District of Columbia Plumbing and Gas Fitting Bonds will soon be up for renewal once again. The current bonds expire on March 31, 2014. We are looking to get an early start on the renewal process and want to offer all MWPHCC members a group discount on the bonds.

If you are interested in renewing your bond with the group discounted rate, you must be a paid member in good standing with the MWPHCC. The rate has increased slightly this year and will be \$185 per bond. The licensing procedure requires that you

obtain at least two bonds, one for the company and one for the designated master.

A letter with all bond and renewal information will be sent out shortly after the 2014 New Year to all members in good standing. Bond information including a downloadable copy of the necessary forms will also be accessible on our website at [www.mwphcc.org](http://www.mwphcc.org) beginning in early January.

Please complete the form and mail with payment (make check paya-

ble to MWPHCC) to the address on the form by February 15, 2014. We will not process any bonds prior to receiving payment, no exceptions. The Bonds will be prepared by Willis of Tennessee (and underwritten by Travelers). Bonds will be mailed directly to members or can be picked up at a monthly meeting by request.

If you are not a current MWPHCC member and would like to join and renew your bond, please contact Susan Northcutt at 301-879-2912 or [susan@mwphcc.org](mailto:susan@mwphcc.org).

### USPS Proposes Price Changes for January 26, 2014

Highlights of the proposed single-piece First-Class Mail pricing include:

- Letters (1 oz.) — 3-cent increase to 49 cents
- Letters additional ounces — 1-cent increase to 21 cents
- Letters to all international destinations (1 oz.) — \$1.15
- Postcards — 1-cent increase to 34 cents

The proposed prices filed on September 26th, 2013 are subject to a 90-day review by the Postal Regulatory Commission for approval. The purpose of the price increases is to combat the Postal Service's \$20 billion budget gap.

## Lead Free Law beginning January 4, 2014 Nationwide

On January 4, 2014 Federal Law mandates the wetted surface of every pipe, fixture, and fitting sold for or installed in potable water applications not contain more than 0.25% lead by weight. Below are some details of the new law:

### FEDERAL "REDUCTION OF LEAD IN DRINKING WATER ACT" – 2011

- Modified the "Safe Drinking Water Act" of 1974 (amended by "Lead Contamination Control Act" of 1988) to re-define "Lead Free\*" regarding pipes, pipe fittings, plumbing fittings

and fixtures.

- Re-defines "Lead Free\*" to mean: (1) not containing more than 0.2% lead in solder and flux; (2) not more than a weighted average of 0.25% lead in wetted surfaces of pipes, pipe and plumbing fittings and fixtures.
- Exempts use or sale of lead pipes, solder, and flux in pipes or plumbing fittings or fixtures used exclusively for non-potable services.
- Establishes formula for calcu-

lating weighted average lead content.

The State of Maryland in addition to 3 other states have already enacted Lead Free legislation and beginning on January 4, 2014, this legislation will be enacted nationwide.

For more information, visit the website:

[www.gettheleadoutplumbing.com](http://www.gettheleadoutplumbing.com). They offer complete information for contractors and distributors on how this law will impact your business.

**CAUTION**

**LEAD FREE COMPLIANCE**

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# Boiler Training! Trouble-Shooting & Basic Maintenance

Join Us At The Metro Washington PHCC T-4 Training

College Park Holiday Inn  
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## Date / Time:

Thursday, Jan 9th 2014  
6:00 pm

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# 10 Tips You Can Do to Expose Unlicensed Work by Joe Crisara

## Shed Light On Dishonesty

I want to start by saying that I am against government interference in the contracting industry as much as anyone. It is certainly hard enough to profitably operate an hvac service contracting business without another partner who is guaranteed their profit before the contractor owner has to pay all of the bills associated with each job to reveal if there even IS a profit.

However, one of the places where local government and some dishonest people in the trades makes a mockery of the statutes and laws, is in the area of licensing and permits. The reason for licensing and permits is to protect the public against unsafe work being performed. There is also an element of consumer protection. Local government has registered and tested licensed professionals to protect against unsavory characters that are posing as legitimate service contractors.

All of the honest contractors I know voluntarily follow the requirements to be licensed or registered if the community requires it. These same contractors comply with permits and inspection requirements as well. Even though it increases the cost of doing business and the prices the consumer pays for this service.

## I Know It's Harder To Do it The Right Way

With the economy the way it is, unlicensed and un-permitted work is at an all-time high. Many could argue that those who skirt the laws and codes are honest people just trying to make a buck for their family. My question is, what about the families of legitimate licensed contractors who follow the rules? Is their family less important?

Without the added costs of licensing, permits, inspections, insurance, payroll taxes and other expenses needed to operate in the light of day, the prices of those who work in the dark shadows avoiding these laws charge less than half the

amount of a legitimate contractor.

## Lessons Will Be Learned

Thankfully most homeowners in the long run, learn their lesson by receiving shoddy work that needs to be fixed or redone by a real contractor. However, real contractors should not have to wait to feed their families while these lessons are learned.

I understand, this licensing and permit process is a great burden to the average contractor who complies with these laws in good faith. This raises the question... What can the licensed or registered service contractor do about the fringe side-jobber or dishonest contractor who works in the shadows and does not follow the process? You know, the people who willfully skirt the local ordinances requiring permits, inspections and in some cases licensing? The ones who seem to consistently "forget" to get a permit over and over again.

Following this process protects consumers as well as increases the quality standards of the work that the hvac, plumbing and electrical industry provides to consumers. When asked most contractors will say there is nothing you can do about it.

## Do Nothing & You're Part Of The Problem

I would like to offer some ideas to all of the honest contractors who follow the correct licensing and permit process. The people who have worked hard in some cases for generations to build their name and reputation on doing things BETTER than local government asks them to. You who have scratched and clawed in a day-to-day struggle to make ends meet only to have some "hack" avoid the local laws and ordinances that you follow each and every day and then lowball a price to do the work without permit or inspection.

## You Can Make a Difference If You Take Action

Remember that the squeaky wheel gets the grease. I have personally seen contractors I know make a difference in towns and villages who have sleepy or just downright dishonest inspectors, by getting serious about this issue. You may not think it is worth the time to take action. I know time is money but I want you to think of how much time you spend on estimates competing with these lowball losers who don't follow the rules and then get the job anyway. On top of that think of how much time you spend complaining about how potential customers will "learn their lesson" by going with the unfair competitor.

## Okay, What Can I Do?

Here are some of the techniques that I recommend honest contractors do about this problem...

- **Do It Legal** - Get a lawyer to write a letter on your behalf about the specific contractor and the specific address of home. Ask if you can purchase these in bulk. How much effort does it take to change the name and address of the complaint? One attorney said he would send out 10 letters for \$175.
- **Ask For Enforcement** - State the law or ordinance that is being violated by the contractor and homeowner not being in compliance with licensing or permit laws
- **State the Consequences** - In the letter state the unfair business practice this presents, the loss of jobs and the potential danger to the community from these non-inspected jobs. Let them know that if a fire, flood or carbon monoxide incident occurs at this address that you will be front and center that you reported this activity months before it happened.

*Continued on page 10*



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## 10 Tips You Can Do to Expose Unlicensed Work by Joe Crisara

*Continued from Page 8*

- **Demand Action** – Demand the contractor be fined, penalized and even banned from doing business for not following the permit/inspection process. In some states and cities it is a crime to do business without a license or permit. If this is not the case write your councilman and start a movement to make such a law.
- **Get Names** – Walk into the building department and hand the letter personally to a supervisor or inspector. Most importantly GET THEIR NAME and write it down in front of that person. Tell them to update you with the progress as a public citizen as to what action has been taken. Provide all contact information so they can keep you in the loop. Tell them you will not forget to follow up with a superior if you don't hear back.
- **Kick It Upstairs** – Let the building department know that you are sending this letter to the mayor's office and village or city board members. This makes all parties responsible and culpable should a horror story happen to a homeowner who purchases from an unlicensed contractor.
- **Accountability** – Advise all interested and influential branches of local government that legal action will be taken against the city if nothing is done about this issue. They will be held accountable as public servants and personally as a member of the community.
- **Make a Deadline** – Create a deadline as to when you expect to be updated about this situation. Follow through by escalating the report to higher ups in government and

also the media.

- **Use the Media** – I know that politicians, inspectors and the media are not very popular with service contractors. However, use them to further the greater good. Local television stations absolutely LOVE to do stings on illegal contractor activity. Witness ACCA member Bobby Ring from Myer & Depew in New Jersey who was the “consultant” to NBC's Dateline in a recent sting.
- **Turn Over the Rock** – Also send the letter to the offending contractor, (if you can find them) and let them know that they may be a party to the eventual lawsuit. Turn over all rocks and let the maggots squirm in the light of day. Let them know that trouble is coming and that everyone has been informed.

### Don't Give Up At First Resistance

Get permission from your lawyer to send this same letter to other cities and towns where you find license and permit violations. With the only change to the letter being the address of the home and the contractor or person in violation. You must keep doing this for each time you lose a job where no permit was pulled. Obviously this will rock the apple cart but you must stand firm on principle.

### Create An Alliance Of Honesty

Also attend local contractor meetings such as ACCA and PHCC and let your fellow honest contractors know about this process so they can do the same thing. You will probably never take legal action, but the threat of this is too big to ignore. Especially if multiple people in the local city or village know that each

other knows about the situation but does nothing to stop it.

### Call The Press

Finally send a copy of this letter about this situation to the local media with a letter from you talking about how unlicensed contractors are a danger to our community. Ask them to run a story about this to create awareness. Tell them that you are available as an expert on this subject to be interviewed for the story. This is great PR for your company as well.

### You CAN Do A Lot

I completely disagree with those who say we can do nothing about this. As you can see by the above, there is a lot you can do. Remember that if you want a fair playing field you sometimes have to fight for it! When it cost “Cheap Charlie” contractors money, they will take the path of least resistance and start to follow the codes and laws to keep our families safe.

I also completely disagree with those claiming that government is “too lazy” or that this is “government interference” in this situation. It is a matter of fairness and a service we are already paying for with our taxes. Shame on us as for not demanding that we get the enforcement of these laws that we have paid for with our hard earned taxes. Remember “We the People” ARE the government and as citizens, we are the boss of the building department and the mayor's office. Hold them accountable and the laziness and uneven enforcement will stop.

*Joe Crisara, CEO of ContractorSelling.com is America's Service Sales Coach.*

In our area, licensed contractors must have their **Company Name and License Numbers** on a properly lettered truck. Our association is working with the area licensing regulatory agencies to address unlicensed contractors.

If you suspect an unlicensed contractor:

- ⇒ In Montgomery or Prince George's County, please contact Edward James at 301-206-8616 or [eames@wsscwater.com](mailto:eames@wsscwater.com)
- ⇒ In Washington, DC, please call 1-888-811-5974 and check out their website at <http://www.lni.wa.gov/TradesLicensing/Contractors/ContractorFraud/>
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## Metropolitan Washington Association of Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors

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*PHCC Mission*

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