



**Metropolitan Washington Association of
Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors**

Newsleak

Message from the President — Bill Royston

Calendar of Events

- November 6 - Meeting
 - ⇒ 5:00 - Board Meeting
 - ⇒ 6:00 - T-4 Training :
Steam Boiler Systems
 - ⇒ 7:30 - Dinner and
General Meeting
- Dec 4 - Meeting

This month, on November 4th there are mid-term elections. Mid-terms elections historically have low voter turnout for various reasons. I hope that all of our members will go to the polls and exercise their right to vote. Even though some of the races that are receiving National attention may not impact you, there are also local races and ballot issues that affect your everyday life. State or county level decisions can have a huge impact on your business and personal life. Get informed on the candidates and issues and get out and vote!

And speaking of voting, at this month's general meeting we will be presenting the MWPCC 2015 Slate of Officers. And then at next

month's meeting on December 4th, the general membership will vote on the slate of officers. Please be sure to attend both the November and December meeting so that you can choose the leadership of this organization that will lead the chapter over the next year. Additionally if you have been thinking of serving on our Board of Directors, let us know. You can be added to the slate. We are always looking for more individuals that would like to either serve on the board or help with special projects and events.

Also at our November meeting, we will have a dynamic presentation on Steam Boiler Systems given by Jack Guilfoyle of Cummins-Wagner. This technical

training will begin at 6:00 pm and will provide a detailed explanation on residential and light commercial steam boiler systems and their accessories.



I want to wish all of our members and their families a very happy Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is the perfect time to count your blessings, spend time with family and enjoy some great food.

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

Cummins-Wagner Sponsors MWPCC November Meeting

We hope that you will join us for the MWPCC November meeting on Thursday, November 6, 2014 sponsored by Cummins-Wagner Co.

At 6:00 pm, Jack Guilfoyle of Cummins-Wagner will present our T-4 Training: "Steam Boiler System Survival Tips," at the Holiday Inn in College Park, MD. They will cover the selection and operation of steam system components including traps, controls and condensate handling equipment. The focus will be on residential and light commercial jobs.

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 November meeting and see how the great people at Cummins-Wagner can help your business!

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The Big Build - The National Building Museum

The Big Build, was held on Saturday, September 20, 2014 at the National Building Museum in Washington, DC. This annual hands-on festival showcases many trades to children and their families. Metro Washington PHCC member, Shapiro & Duncan, Inc. provides a large exhibit for children and their families to showcase the plumbing and

HVAC industry among the other trades and craftsmen.

Some of the demonstrations this year included: measuring and cutting PVC pipe to make piggy banks, assembling a “plumbing tree” with pipe fittings (one of the biggest highlights of the festival) and new this year was a

BIM scavenger hunt video game which was also a big hit.

Many thanks to Shapiro & Duncan for coordinating and organizing this annual event, setting up the demonstrations and for their ongoing commitment to promote the trades to the public.





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Finding an SEO Company That Will Make - Not Break - Your Business in 2015

Each day we hear more and more horror stories about SEO scams, well-intentioned but misguided Web marketing efforts, or even tech folks who can't answer simple business questions – you name it.

While most SEO companies have at least adequate technical skills, many don't seem to provide what business owners really find useful: a voice on the other end of the phone. You would think that it wouldn't be too difficult to find a company willing to explain their process, right? Guess again.

So, what's a business owner to do when it is time to focus on SEO? In this article, we'll highlight some of the ways you can steer away from the wrong Web firms and find the right one.

Know what to expect

Knowing what to reasonably expect from an SEO company can make all the difference.

Ask yourself these questions at the beginning of the process:

- Do you want to have input on day-to-day SEO operations?
- Are you okay with waiting a few months for significant results?
- Do you want a dedicated point of contact?

As with housing, 'let the buyer beware' is the rule. Most of the time, you may not have enough information about what you're purchasing. Most SEO firms will leave you feeling disappointed if you don't do your research beforehand.

Here are the five most common ways that SEO firms disappoint their customers. If you want to get a good return on your marketing dollars, a great head start includes being wary of these common pitfalls:

1) The "Overpromise & Under-deliver" Routine

The majority of SEO companies tend to over-promise to get your company more business. Any promise of immediate results should set off red flags right away. Most SEO providers well promise you the moon just to get you to sign up.

2) The "Hide What We're NOT Doing" Routine

If an SEO company isn't taking the time to educate you with key knowledge about their process, one of two things could be the cause. On the one hand, they might not want to give away secrets. But, on the other, it might be because they have no intention of delivering results. Figuring out why they may be hiding information is critical.

3) The "Just Wing It" Routine

If an SEO company is hesitant to give up ANY information about their process or roadmap for your success, start looking elsewhere. This is a huge red flag and you deserve to have all of your questions answered.

4) The "Long Time No Hear" Routine

Some SEO providers will attempt to convince you to sign a contract, but then go dark any time you try to reach them to see what they've been up to. You should expect to have a dedicated point of contact, and a direct line to reach them so that you can have your questions answered right away. And of course, avoid getting locked into a long-term contract.

5) The "Excuse Me, Come Again?" Routine

Many people at SEO firms are hired for their technical skills, not their ability to talk to customers or listen to their business needs. The best SEO providers are good at both, and will be able to patiently explain their process in plain English, even if you're having trouble understanding.

Of course, not every service provider can get it right ALL of the time and SEO providers are certainly not exempt from this rule.

Make sure you understand exactly what you're getting, why it's right for your business and what the price *really* is before you sign on the dotted line.

Just know, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. While web marketing can be confusing and scary, it's easiest to remember that hiring an SEO provider is just like hiring a contractor. The key to picking a good one is finding whose capabilities line up with what you really need. Ask as many questions as you can – you'll be glad you did.

Try these questions for starters:

- Ask for references in your industry. You'll be amazed how many "bad apples" this will weed out.
- Ask how to reach them if you have questions. You should have a direct phone number and an email address for contacting your provider.
- Ask what the plan is if your results are not satisfactory. Your SEO provider should work with you to try out new strategies if current ones aren't working.

Getting to Page One on Google is realistic, if you're working with the right firm. But finding an SEO provider you can trust and who can get you great results while communicating with you can take some research. Look for a SEO partner who takes the time to understand your needs and educate you and you will get the results you deserve. Now go out there and market harder!

Alain Parcan is the Director of Marketing for Market Hardware, Inc. and contributed this article. Market Hardware helps small businesses compete on the Web and offers special discounts for professional association members. Ask Alain any Website or Internet Marketing question by emailing inquiries@markethardware.com or calling 888-381-6925.



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Winter Storms and Extreme Cold - Get Prepared

Although winter is another month away, predictions this year are calling for one of the worst winters in recent history. Winter storms can create hazards and complications for businesses as well as residences. Being prepared can help everyone stay safe and before bad weather hits is the perfect time to get prepared.

One of the primary concerns is the winter weather's ability to knock out heat, power and communications services to your home or office, sometimes for days at a time. Heavy snowfall and extreme cold can immobilize an entire region.

The National Weather Service refers to winter storms as the "Deceptive Killers" because most deaths are indirectly related to the storm. Instead, people die in traffic accidents on icy roads and of hypothermia from prolonged exposure to cold. It is important to be prepared for winter weather before it strikes.

Before Winter Storms Begin

To prepare for a winter storm you should do the following:

Before winter approaches, add the following supplies to your business and home emergency kit:

- Rock salt or more environmentally safe products to melt ice on walkways. Visit the Environmental Protection Policy.
- Sand to improve traction.
- Snow shovels and other snow removal equipment.
- Sufficient heating fuel. You may become isolated in your home and regular fuel sources may be cut off. Store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove.
- Adequate clothing and blankets to keep you warm.
- Make a family communications plan. Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to know how you will

contact one another, how you will get back together and what you will do in case of an emergency.

- A NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts alerts and warnings directly from the NWS for all hazards. You may also sign up in advance to receive notifications from your local emergency services. Download FEMA's Be Smart. Know Your Alerts and Warnings for a summary of notifications at: www.ready.gov/prepare. Free smart phone apps, such as those available from FEMA and the American Red Cross, provide information about finding shelters, providing first aid, and seeking assistance for recovery.

- Minimize travel. If travel is necessary, keep a disaster supplies kit in your vehicle.

- Bring pets/companion animals inside during winter weather. Move other animals or livestock to sheltered areas with non-frozen drinking water.

Winterize Your Vehicle

Check or have a mechanic check the following items on your car:

- **Antifreeze levels** - ensure they are sufficient to avoid freezing.
- **Battery and ignition system** - should be in top condition and battery terminals should be clean.
- **Brakes** - check for wear and fluid levels.
- **Exhaust system** - check for leaks and crimped pipes and repair or replace as necessary. Carbon monoxide is deadly and usually gives no warning.
- **Fuel and air filters** - replace and keep water out of the system by using additives and maintaining a full tank of gas. A full tank will keep the fuel line from freezing.
- **Heater and defroster** - ensure they work properly.
- **Lights and flashing hazard lights** - check for serviceability.

- **Oil** - check for level and weight. Heavier oils congeal more at low temperatures and do not lubricate as well.

- **Thermostat** - ensure it works properly.

- **Windshield wiper equipment** - repair any problems and maintain proper washer fluid level.

- **Install good winter tires** - Make sure the tires have adequate tread. All-weather radials are usually adequate for most winter conditions. However, some jurisdictions require that to drive on their roads, vehicles must be equipped with chains or snow tires with studs.

Update the emergency kits in your vehicles with:

- a shovel
- windshield scraper and small broom
- flashlight
- battery powered radio
- extra batteries
- water
- snack food
- matches
- extra hats, socks and mittens
- first aid kit with pocket knife
- necessary medications
- blanket(s)
- tow chain or rope
- road salt and sand
- booster cables
- emergency flares
- fluorescent distress flag

Continued on page 9



"One of the primary concerns is the winter weather's ability to knock out heat, power and communications services to your home or office, sometimes for days at a time. Heavy snowfall and extreme cold can immobilize an entire region."

Winter Storms and Extreme Cold - Get Prepared continued from page 8

Winterize Your Home and Business

- Extend the life of your fuel supply by insulating walls and attics, caulking and weather-stripping doors and windows, and installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic.
- Clear rain gutters; repair roof leaks and cut away tree branches that could fall on a house or other structure during a storm.
- Insulate pipes with insulation or newspapers and plastic and allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing. Running water, even at a trickle, helps prevent pipes from freezing.
- All fuel-burning equipment should be vented to the outside and kept clear.
- Keep fire extinguishers on hand, and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them. House fires pose an additional risk, as more people turn to alternate heating sources without taking the necessary safety

precautions.

- Insulate your home by installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic from the inside to keep cold air out.
- Hire a contractor to check the structural ability of the roof to sustain unusually heavy weight from the accumulation of snow - or water, if drains on flat roofs do not work.

Carbon Monoxide

Caution: Each year, an average of 430 Americans die from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning, and there are more than 20,000 visits to the emergency room with more than 4,000 hospitalizations. Carbon monoxide-related deaths are highest during colder months. These deaths are likely due to increased use of gas-powered furnaces and alternative heating, cooking, and power sources used inappropriately indoors during power outages.

- Never use a generator, grill, camp stove

or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any partially enclosed area. Locate unit away from doors, windows and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors. Keep these devices at least 20 feet from doors, windows, and vents.

- The primary hazards to avoid when using alternate sources for electricity, heating or cooking are carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock and fire.
- Install carbon monoxide alarms in central locations on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas to provide early warning of accumulating carbon monoxide.
- If the carbon monoxide alarm sounds, move quickly to a fresh location outdoors or by an open window or door.
- Call for help from the fresh air location and remain there until emergency personnel arrive to assist you.

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Tips to Avoid Having Sick Employees at Work by Rieva Lesonsky

It's that time of year – the time when hacking coughs, sneezes and nose-blowing ring through every small business. How can you deal with sick employees at work and keep them healthy (and productivity high) during cold and flu season?



Encourage Sick Employees to Stay Home

The benefits of having a sick employee come in to handle his or her work are far outweighed by the risk that the person will infect the rest of the staff. However, if employees feel penalized for staying home, they won't do so.

One study found that staying home just one day when sick reduces the chance of co-workers' catching the flu by 25 percent. Staying home two days cuts the risk by 40 percent.

If employees are worried they'll get overloaded with work while they're

out, try letting them work from home. At the same time, don't require employees to work (even at home) if they truly need to rest.

Keep it Clean

Colds and flu spread in winter because people are more likely to spend time inside in an enclosed environment.

Keep that environment as germ-free as you can by making sure your office is properly maintained.

Keep disinfectant sprays on hand and regularly spray down door handles, break room surfaces, bathroom faucets and anything else that lots of people touch all day. If your staff shares tech tools like tablet computers, handheld bar-code scanners, desktop computers, cash registers or headsets, make sure you have the appropriate cleaners and cloths to disinfect these surfaces at the beginning of each shift or when people trade off their equipment.

Also, keep tissues and lots of hand

sanitizer on hand – consider having some available in every room.

Encourage Healthy Habit

Post signs in the restrooms and break room reminding employees to wash their hands with soap. Also post signs reminding employees to clean equipment that is shared.

If your business offers health insurance that covers flu vaccines, encourage employees to get vaccinated. Since many people don't want to make a special trip to the doctor's to do this, see if your insurer offers any type of mobile vaccination clinic. Some medical providers will come out to businesses and provide flu shots for a fee.

Even as a small business, you may be able to band with other local businesses to get this service or piggyback on a bigger company in your office building that is bringing in a flu shot clinic.

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PHCC Mission

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