



Metropolitan Washington Association of  
Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors

# Newsleak

## Calendar of Events

- Sept 8 - Meeting
- \*\*Date Change: 2nd Thurs of the Month**
- ⇒ 5:00 -Board Meeting
- ⇒ 6:30 -T-4 Training Seminar
- ⇒ 7:30 p.m. - Dinner and General Meeting
- PHCC Connect
- Oct. 6 - Meeting

## Message from the President — Buckey Davis



Now that summer is coming to an end and fall is fast approaching it seems time to switch gears. We are getting ready for a great season of meetings and trainings and are looking for strong participation from our members.

The summer brought a lot of turmoil both politically and economically. With major elections coming up in 2012 we are sure to see more posturing and fighting in Congress and the Senate. One area where PHCC National is really making strong advances is in their grassroots approach to influence our legislators.

Now more than ever, PHCC is

working with other industry groups and the community to increase our visibility on Capitol Hill. This includes encouraging our members to write letters, make phone calls, send emails and meet with your representatives. Mark Riso, PHCC Government Relations Director wrote an article earlier this year for Contractor magazine detailing the importance of this grassroots movement. He states, “Clearly, PHCC has great opportunities to quantify and communicate the industry’s collective benefits to our communities, our municipalities, and our local, state, and federal economies. And — at a time when small businesses are driving na-

tional policy — it is crucial to reach out to the decision-makers.” No one else is going to work to protect our interests. Make a commitment to get involved this year and see what you can do to help influence our local and national representatives.

Our first meeting of the season will be on Thursday, September 8, 2011. Thos. Somerville will be our sponsor. Please come out and support them and our association.

Please feel free to contact me anytime at 202-288-6300.

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## MWPHCC September Meeting Sponsored by Thos. Somerville

Join us for our first monthly meeting after the summer break on Thursday, September 8, 2011 at the Holiday Inn - College Park, 10000 Baltimore Avenue, College Park, Maryland. **Please note that this is the 2nd Thursday of the month.**

The T-4 Training, “Triangle Tube Challenger: Combination High Efficiency Boiler and Domestic Water Heater,” will begin at 6:30 pm. The general meeting and dinner will follow after the training.

Thos. Somerville began their customer focused business over 140 years ago. A family owned business from the start, Thos. Somerville Co. strives to operate customer focused branch operations. At Thos. Somerville Co., they know that excellent service is the key to their success.

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## How to Motivate Employees

*Are your employees “tired?” Has the uncertain economy and possible frozen (or reduced) wages and benefits hindered their productivity and enthusiasm for their jobs?*



Poor morale is the primary driver of dissension, turnover and inefficiency, according to SESCO Management Consultants. So how do you motivate people and keep the morale level high? Unfortunately, studies have shown that you really cannot motivate another person. However, you can make a direct impact on the individuals' motivation by creating an environment in which a person will want to motivate him/herself. True motivation is accomplished by linking what the individual desires with the specific goals, tasks and behaviors that the job requires.

### Motivation

The supervisor is the key to good morale/motivation. With that in mind, there are three areas that will determine success: Attitude (toward organization, employees and work), Commitment (to organization, good employee relations and good work) and Example (how you act, how you talk).

Here are five key principles for successful leadership that will help you maintain an environment suitable for

strong motivation:

- ◆ Always focus on the situation, the problem or behavior—not the person.
- ◆ Build the person's self-esteem.
- ◆ Establish and maintain a constructive relationship.
- ◆ Keep the two-way communications lines open.
- ◆ Take initiatives to make things better.
- ◆ Lead by example.
- ◆ Be positive by showing optimism, encouragement, concern, etc.
- ◆ Recognition

Recognizing the efforts of employee is very important. It has been proven that when employees are rewarded for their day-to-day contributions, they work even harder. **On a daily basis:**

Personalize your recognition and make it sincere. Recognize specific results and behaviors and how they help your department or organization.

Positive reinforcement—The more you recognize and reinforce positive behavior, the harder your team will work to get that recognition.

Be specific—Identify the noted behavior and how it matters.

**Here are some effective ways to convey your appreciation:**

- ◆ Verbal/written thanks
- ◆ Money—bonus or raise. (If your business is not currently in a position to provide these, be sure to consider once conditions improve.)
- ◆ Time off
- ◆ Promotion
- ◆ Announcement of appreciation at a group meeting
- ◆ Take out to lunch
- ◆ Note to spouse

Employees need a job that's challenging and to be in a situation where they are feeling valued and have opportunities for growth and advancement. Consider implementing some of these tips, and you'll be on the way toward creating a workforce that looks forward to work every morning will be more efficient, effective and profitable.

*(Information for this article was obtained from a recent PHCC webinar presented by Jamie Hasty, Senior Consultant with SESCO Management Consultants. The free presentation is available “on-demand” at [www.phccweb.org](http://www.phccweb.org).)*

*“The supervisor is the key to good morale/motivation.”*

## Welcome New Member

We would like to welcome Cannon Plumbing and Heating as the newest member to our chapter. Cannon Plumbing, owned by Nick Cannon is located Kensington, MD.

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## Seeking the Cheapest Plumber in Town by Steve Coscia

*"In all customer relationships there exists a door through which a business relationship can emerge and this must become part of a plumber's service culture."*



Customers have a license to misbehave. I tell my clients that "A customer's job is to do what's best for them. Customer's care little about whether their behavior upsets a plumber's phone rep." A customer's bad attitude and subsequent unruly behavior shouts the assertion "It's all about me!"

This happens when a customer needs a plumber to fix a broken hot water heater and calls numerous service companies seeking the lowest quote. In the customer's mind, the "It's all about me" attitude drives this behavior. It's all about getting the lowest price. The customer is not interested in a business relationship; instead he is seeking a commoditized service, performed at the least expensive amount. During the customer's quest for a cheap price, the feelings of the responding phone reps at a plumbing company are of no consequence.

"How much do you charge to fix a hot water heater?" asks the customer in a terse and perfunctory manner. If the phone rep begins to qualify symptomatic details or asks when the hot water heater stopped functioning, the customer may abruptly attempt to steer the phone rep back on the "just tell me how much you charge" track with even more curt mannerisms. Anyone in the plumbing business understands that quoting exact prices over the phone is a precarious practice because in the absence of vital details and visual confirmation, there's a good chance a price quote will be incorrect. But customer's still demand a price as a result of their "It's all about me" attitude. So, if the customer doesn't receive a quote, they feel justified in calling another plumber until they get what they seek. The customer ends any hope of

a business relationship and slams the preverbal door shut. Any hope of re-opening the door is remote due to the customers focus on price.

On the receiving end, the strategy I recommend to phone reps at plumbing companies, in handling price-shopping customers, includes shifting the conversation from price to value.

So when a customer asks, "How much do you charge to fix a hot water heater?" the phone rep's response should be, "That's a great question and we can give you quote after we get visual confirmation about what is wrong. Shall I schedule an appointment for you today? Our trucks are fully stocked, our technicians are all certified and our work is guaranteed. May I please have your name and street address?"

When a phone rep focuses on value rather than price in a well-paced, articulate and friendly manner - a new dialogue begins. This new dialogue challenges a customer's mindset about whether a customer should entrust their home and their family's safekeeping to the cheapest guy in town. It's subtle and effective, and in many cases customers will pause and consider a value-based proposition. World class plumbers view all customer inquiries as opportunities which require a courteous and constructive response.

The icing on the cake occurs when a skilled phone rep invites a customer to call back after searching for the cheapest guy in town. So if a customer insists on making more calls to local plumbers, a phone rep should close the call this way,

"If you don't find what you're looking for today, please call me back. We have been servicing this region for years, my name is Steve and my extension is 272 and I'll be ready to help. Okay?" This invitation is known as "keeping the door open" and it is very effective. Success with keeping the door open strategy lies in the reality that a customer's search for the cheapest guy in town will often fail. This predicament puts the customer in a difficult and sometimes embarrassing situation, because the hot water heater still needs to be fixed. So who will the customer call now? The customer will call the home service company who extended the nicest invitation along with a persuasive value-based explanation. In all customer relationships there exists a door through which a business relationship can emerge and this must become part of a plumber's service culture. It is the role of managers and company owners to ensure that their staff is well-trained to deliver a value-based service message which invites customers to call back.

*Steve Coscia helps Plumbing and HVACR companies make more money through increased customer retention, improved upselling and reduced on-the-job stress. He is the author of the HVAC Customer Service Handbook. A best selling author, columnist and customer service specialist, Steve presents keynote speeches and facilitates HVACR customer service workshops. To learn more about Coscia Communications go to [www.coscia.com](http://www.coscia.com) or contact Steve Coscia at 610-853-9836 or [steve@coscia.com](mailto:steve@coscia.com).*



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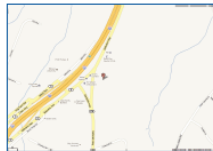


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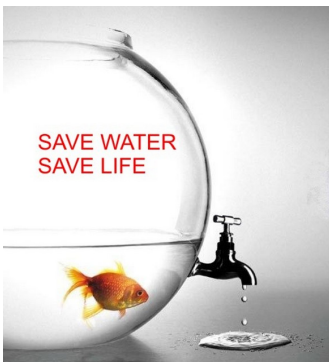


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## Tech Tip: Saving Water During Repairs



Today's water-saving technology or potable water protection can easily be defeated when repair work is done in a casual way. The following are issues to remember:

Make sure a replacement flapper is compatible with the water closet being repaired. Many models utilize a specific type of flapper to maintain the 1.6 gallon flush cycle. Improper parts can greatly increase the water consumption causing wasted water and increased utility bills for the consumer.

When replacing a flush valve in a tank-type water closet, be sure the

overflow tube is the same height. A taller overflow tube may increase the amount of water used per flush. Many newer efficient water closets utilize a specific proprietary flush valve assembly; be sure aftermarket models will provide the same performance.

An anti-siphon fill valve must be installed in water closet tanks; this is an important safety device that protects the potable water supply. One-piece water closets frequently require a model specific valve for proper operation and potable water protection.

Always set the water level to the manufacturer's recommended height. Beware the water closet that seems to flush twice when it is cycled only once; usually the water level is too high in the tank or an improper flapper has been used.

Maintaining plumbing fixtures in good working order is an important part of the plumbing service industry. The goal should be to keep them operating as safely and efficiently as possible.





Pictured is Steve Heidler, Zone 2 Director and Past President of Metro Washington PHCC helping to cut the cake in the Rayburn House Office Building during a reception on August 3, 2011 with Congressional staffers sponsored by PHCC, ACCA, AHRI, HARDI and NATE. The Industry Lobby Day and Congressional Reception was held as an educational event to increase awareness of our industry on Capitol Hill.



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## Toolbox Talks: Preventing Musculoskeletal Disorders

**Sound work practices and proper ergonomics—fitting the job, tools, and equipment to the person—can prevent painful, costly, and potentially disabling musculoskeletal disorders.**

Musculoskeletal disorders, also called MSDs, cost American business an estimated \$7.4 billion a year in workers' compensation costs and additional billions on medical treatment and hidden costs. What's worse, that number is growing. MSDs, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, are caused by making the same motion repeatedly. Symptoms include pain, numbness, and weakness in the wrists and hands. The condition can be permanently disabling.

### Legal Issues

OSHA regulation: General Duty Clause (Sec. 5(a)1, Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970).

Comments: OSHA has been studying ergonomics very closely for a number of years and has issued guidelines for several industries, including meat-packing, poultry processing, retail grocery stores, and nursing homes. Much of the information in these guidelines can be useful for other industries as well. Because there is no specific ergonomics standard, OSHA has cited many companies for ergonomic hazards under the General Duty Clause. Stiff penalties for these violations are not unusual.

### Management Issues

Reducing employees' risk of repetitive motion injuries means paying attention to both the equipment they use and the way their work is organized.

- ✓ Tools and equipment. Tools and equipment should be selected and arranged with sound ergonomics in mind.
- ❑ Use power tools, rather than hand tools, for repeated motions if possible.
- ❑ Where possible, select hand tools with ergonomically designed grips.
- ❑ Try to provide tools suitable to the individual using them (Consider left-handedness, small or large hands).
- ❑ Make ergonomics a consideration in job hazard analysis. If, for example, a worker must repeatedly reach or twist awkwardly, rearrange the work area.
- ✓ Administrative controls. The best form of prevention is to limit the time any worker spends doing the same motion over and over. Your options may include:
  - ❑ Job rotation. Strain on any part of the body is reduced when you switch periodically to different tasks involving different movements.
  - ❑ Breaks. Make sure that no worker performs a repetitive motion task for more than two consecutive hours. This is especially important when over-time

is commonplace. Those few extra hours a day at the same task could make a big difference.

- ❑ Pacing. A repetitive motion performed at a breakneck pace means more motions—and more problems. Although you want to get the job done as quickly as possible, you don't want it done so fast that it puts the person performing it out of commission.

### Training Issues

Employee training and alertness in this high-risk area is especially important because only the worker can first recognize the onset of a problem. Employees should receive thorough training in:

- ✓ The nature of musculoskeletal disorders
- ✓ Symptoms
- ✓ Ways to prevent them
- ✓ The importance of reporting symptoms

Your training may also include some simple stretching exercises workers can use to relieve the stresses of repetitive motions.

*Toolbox Talks is presented by Quality Service Contractors (QSC) - an Enhanced Service Group of PHCC. For more information, you can visit their website: <http://www.qsc-phcc.org>*



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