



NCHPBA

U P D A T E S

B U R N I N G N E W S & I S S U E S

Fall 2002

Recently I heard that this past October was the third coldest in history. I guess this is more proof of global warming. One nice thing about cold weather is this usually will heat up sales and profits. I hope you are having a strong selling season.

Last time we talked about opportunities (problems), which keep popping up. Well, opportunity is knocking at our door again. Those members in Wisconsin should have received a mailing on code interpretation that could effect the installation of stoves. Through a number of phone calls, a quick fix was found. It would be in your best interest to

follow through on this issue. NCHPBA is going to be working with the state to improve this Rule.

One community in Minnesota has changed the way direct vent appliances can be installed. This opportunity has yet to be fully addressed, but we are also working on "knocking" at this situation.

NCHPBA is definitely working to help our membership. During the next year look for a number of new programs to help you improve your business.

Good Luck,
Bill Sylvester

EXPO 2003

March 2003 is not really that far away. If you are planning on attending the Hearth & Home EXPO (and we think everyone should!) it is not too early to make your travel plans and PARTICULARLY your lodging arrangements. HPBA says booking is already going extremely strong so, to get the hotel you want, make those arrangements now. Education programs are scheduled March 5 – 8, 2003 while the Exposition runs from March 6 – 8.

You can make your reservations online by going to the HPBA web page at www.hpba.org and click on the little graphic that looks like a bed on the home page. There are options for attendees and exhibitors. If you want to make reservations via phone, just call the Nashville Housing Bureau at 800-657-6910. Space is being held until February 4 so don't wait. Make your reservations now.

May in Minnesota

While you are marking your calendar for EXPO, don't forget to block out time to attend the North Central affiliate annual meeting and conference May 18-20, 2003. We are going back to Minnesota for 2003 but will have a new site. We have plans to go to the quaint town of Red Wing. Golf will be on one of the bluff courses and we even plan a dinner cruise on the Mississippi.

Rodger Holland and Denny Hildebrand are working diligently to have a variety of topics with the intent to have all courses certified by NFI so anyone needing continuing education credit will be able to obtain such by attending the program. Planning these programs each year is a great challenge.

If you have a name of a speaker or are particularly interested in a topic, let Denny or Rodger know so we can try to meet your needs.

Each year we also ask our members to consider a level of sponsorship. This year we will have 5 levels of general sponsorship (from \$100-\$1,000) and, of course, event sponsorship such as the golf luncheons, breakfasts, cruise ride, etc. Flyers will be sent out as the event draws nearer. Interested parties may also contact the affiliate office to reserve sponsorship in their name. All sponsors get plaques, and verbal and printed acknowledgments on-site and in the newsletters.

NFI

Do you have your installers certified? Most shops are making plans to do so. To find out where review courses or exams are being held, look it up off the HPBA web page. Go to www.hpba.org and click on the NFI graphic. On the left side of the page click on the menu option "Fireplace Professionals" (one of the red boxes). Then click on "Locate and Review Exam Sites."

The old HEARTH certification exams used to be able to be taken at local libraries. This is no longer an option. Instead, NFI has contracted with LaserGrade Computer Testing. LaserGrade is the largest US owned and operated supervised examination network, which has over 700 test centers in the US and Canada. They provide a secure environment for exam administration.

Laws and Rules

Wisconsin. There is regulatory information about installation of hearth products in Wisconsin 1 and 2 family homes for remodeling or new construction. All Wisconsin NCHPBA members should have received a letter detailing this information. If you did not get a letter and do installations in Wisconsin or just want more information, contact the NCHPBA office.

Minnesota. Government Coordinator Mike Nordby is currently investigating a remodeling hearth installation issue affecting the county of Shorewood in Minnesota. Details were

To take an exam through LaserGrade, contact NFI (703-524-8030) and order the exam application. Send the completed application with payment to NFI. Allow a week for NFI to process your payment and then contact LaserGrade to schedule your exam. They can be reached at 800-211-2754 or go to www.LaserGrade.com.

It is highly recommended to review the manuals before taking the exam. Whether or not you obtain certification, many folks are obtaining the manuals as references to assist with troubleshooting. Members can purchase the wood or gas manuals for \$79 each or both for \$150. Again, contact NFI directly for certification or to purchase the manuals.

not available at time of press. If you provide service in that county, contact Mike or the office for more information.

The rest of the NCHPBA states are quiet at this point with any legislative or regulatory issues affecting hearth installation or with our patio and barbecue products. We will keep watch. If you have an issue, do contact the office or your state coordinator so we can deal properly with the issue. Again, the goal is to take a problem and make it into an opportunity.

HEARTH SURVEY—PLEASE RESPOND

Enclosed is a survey prepared by HEARTH to ascertain your education needs. Retailers, Service and Distributor members are

respectfully requested to PLEASE take the 3 minutes to complete the survey and fax it back. It will be worth your time!

To Web or not to Web...that is the Question

What did we ever do without a fax machine? How did we ever conduct business without a computer? Or e-mail? Ever hear those words? Most of us echo these over and over again. Yet there still is a technology many have not yet ventured into...namely having a web page.

Some web pages are specifically for consumers, some are for business colleagues, and many are just filled with junk, so how does one make the decision that having a web page is right for you? After all, web pages for Federal Express or UPS practically sell themselves. People can prep a shipment or track one with a few simple keystrokes. So what would a page do for someone in the hearth, patio or barbecue business?

An article written by Bruce Edger in **BusinessProfile** cites five key factors. The first is **clientele**. He states that your web page will only be noticed if a sizable majority of your clients have Internet access. You will need to do a little research here based on the type of your business. If your current clients use the Internet and you ascertain that potential clients use the Internet, a good web page may be a viable option. [Emphasis should be placed on "good"].

The second factor is **geography**. The more dispersed your client base, the more a web page will be a benefit to enhance communications and access to products. For example, a local hardware store may not consider a web page since their client base is a geographically close neighborhood and is usually just a quick trip. However, if you are the only specialty store within a number of miles, you may want to broadcast your product lines so people will WANT TO MAKE THE TRIP!

The third is your **competitors**. If your rivals have a website AND it is good and producing good results (i.e. purchases) Edger says that is a major clue that you should have one, too. Now, if their site is poor or confusing, you may have more time to make a decision whether to have one of your own. You need to convey a message and clearly do so. Poor web sites turn off people. They are a reflection of the business.

The fourth factor is the **industry** you are in. Edger states that in general, newer industries or those based on new technologies have greater needs for a substantial web presence than older, more traditional industries, which depend on the same age-old processes, used for decades or more. Those with ingrained personal relationships may cause more harm than good by terminating those personal contacts to go to the more impersonal electronic medium.

Finally, the fifth factor is your **product or service**. If your product or service is massive, entails a lengthy sales cycle or need for a "test drive", or shipping costs are significant, you may not need an expensive, full-blown E-Commerce site. You may just want an informative site, interactive site or "how to find us" type site.

Whatever you determine, the best is to keep thinking about a web site. Businesses and associations use it and many families even have their own web sites to communicate with friends and families across the miles, whether national or international.

When you decide to create your business web page, be sure your objectives are clear and it becomes a help rather than a hindrance.

In the News

North Central HPBA member, **George Breiwa**, from the **Chimney Specialists**, was interviewed for an article in the October issue of *Alternative Energy*. The article discussed how hearth dealers worked with contractors.

Mike O'Rourke from **Wilkening Fireplace** will be teaching the 4 hour NCHPBA HearthCheck program at EXPO 2003. He also has developed a shorter version of this program targeted to the builder and building inspector. Call Mike directly or the affiliate office for his availability.

What's Hot in China?

By **Karen Teske-Osborne**

In October, my husband and I spent two weeks in China and toured 5 cities. First of all, if you get the chance to go there, do go—it is an unbelievable experience and well worth the effort (yes, even worth the 20 plus hours to just get there). Secondly, I want to echo the words of Richard Wright in his October editorial where he talks about the impact of the value of China. China is moving forward at a rapid pace and we need to take note of it, now!

China is home to 1.3 billion people. That is one third of the world's population. China has been under a population control mandate since 1978. This allows one child per family unless you are in the rural areas. There, if your first child is a female, you can have a second, with major hope it will be male to help with the farming. I did notice that the vast majority of Chinese children seen were males. Hmmm.

Beijing is their seat of Government. Its 9 million people in the area thrive on history and government activities. Here is where you visit Tiananmen Square and can stand in line for blocks to visit the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall and his resting place to see only his head and hands. Beijing also hosts the huge area (72 hectares or 177.9 acres) of the Gugong Palace Museum, formerly called the Forbidden City. First built in 1406 and completed in 1420 during the Ming Dynasty, it served as the residential palace to 24 Ming and Qing Emperors. It is the largest imperial palace group in the world and has over 9,000 rooms.

Beijing also is home to the Summer Palace with ornate gardens and opulent buildings. There is even a large marble boat, built "because an Empress wanted it", even though it cannot float or ever leave it's dock. The Ming tombs are also in this area and some phenomenal jade factories. It seems all the Emperors spent a lot of time planning their tomb sites. Their first and second Emperors were buried with them, on either side, but in smaller containers. The concubines did not fair quite so well. Those that did not have offspring were allowed to hang themselves and were buried in group gravesites. One Emperor was said to have 3,000 concubines. Totally insane, right? Right? Ya, I

got the same response from the men in our group. Well, I hope at least the female readers will agree with me.

Shanghai is totally opposite of Beijing. A guide said "no one in Shanghai cares about government...they just care about making as much money as possible and spending as much as they make." This is truly a cosmopolitan city. Many foreigners live here or come here on business. There are currently 3,000 skyscrapers in Shanghai and another 2,000 will be built within the next ten years. There are cranes and construction projects everywhere you look. The second tallest building in the world sits across the Bund and the Huangpu River that dissects the old city



New downtown Shanghai. Some of the 3000 skyscrapers.

from the new. There are 16 million people in Shanghai and 13 million bicycles. It seemed like nearly all of the people and bicycles were on the streets at the same time. Cars, trucks, busses and bikes all traverse the same roads at the same times, seemingly oblivious of each other yet driving just millimeters apart, going

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Membership

Yes, it is that time of the year again. Time for the Thanksgiving Turkey, the Christmas Goose and the ever popular NCHPBA dues notice.

What? You say that paying NCHPBA dues is not your most popular holiday event? Well, just like death and taxes, those notices are inevitable and they will be coming. Please remember that several categories are tiered based on size of

company. Both the retail and distributor categories have two levels of dues. Please pay honestly based on the amount of sales, not just the lowest level. A flyer with the levels will be included with your dues statement.

Please review this and if you need to change your category, just do so on the statement and pay the new amount. Or, call the office to check your status now.

What's Hot in China

Continued from page 3



Old downtown Shanghai.

in every direction, sometimes with the green light and sometimes with the red light, turning in front or making u-turns, near misses every minute...but never a cross word or scenes of "road rage." They just accept the massive amount of people and traffic as a way of life. We, Americans, could definitely take a lesson from that attitude!

Downtown Shanghai boasts designer clothes from around the world with prices to match. You can also buy "knockoffs" or even the real thing at the "fashion market" which more resembles a tent town where the expectation is to barter for the sale. You don't need to speak Chinese, just know the exchange rate of RMB (Chinese money) to the dollar is 8.25 to 1 and plan on spending at least 30%-70% less (sometimes even more) than their first offer. All transactions are simply done with a calculator. They show you their price. You punch in your ridiculously low bid and they will reject it. They counter and then you counter and the game goes on. Usually, whatever is your lowest bid will not be accepted until you walk away. Most often they will come and get you as they want the sale. Everyone is also trying to sell you a "Rolex" watch or DVD's for \$1-\$3. Hey—they may even work a week. Just try to get them through "customs." Some bargains are unreal. Silk scarves purchased in the States for \$30.00 or more are obtained for \$1.00-\$3.00. The most paid for a large 100% silk scarf from the silk museum where no discounts are offered was \$13.00. It was estimated the cost for this scarf in the USA would have been well over \$75.00.

Xian, in east central China, sits more in a valley and also gets winds coming from the Gobi Desert. Since the majority of the country heats their homes and cooks with a poor grade of coal, the air reflects the problem. The sand from the Desert also covers everything, even the tree leaves. Smog and fog is a frequent occurrence but seeing Emperor Qin's Terra-cotta Warriors created in 221BC – 206BC is a site to behold—they are housed in huge buildings for their protection and are more climate controlled for preservation. Emperor Qin was the first Chinese Emperor and had over 6,000 clay soldiers and horses constructed life-sized which represented his army. These were to protect him in death. And so they still do. Each one is different. Experts believe these were replicas of his actual army since every one is different, some thin and some heavier...all with different faces. First discovered in 1974 by a farmer digging a well, archeologists are still uncovering more artifacts.

Since China received the bid for the 2008 Olympics, there is now a move by the government to decrease the cost of electricity and propane to encourage families to change from coal to electric or propane use. Got to visit a home of a retired Physics Professor. The living room was about 15' x 15'. The kitchen was about 5' x 8' (if that big). We were told this was a typical middle

income Chinese home. There are no screens on the windows and no insulation material on the walls. Any of our small hearth products would easily heat their entire homes better than what they have now.

High-rise apartments are everywhere. Most have some type of glassed or open porch that is filled with hanging clothes or "stuff." The guides informed us people use these as storage areas because there are none provided in the buildings. You buy, not rent and the cost is \$60 (American) a square foot. The average Chinese worker makes \$2,000 RMB a month. College graduates make about \$5,000 RMB a month. If you do the math, you will see why the Chinese homes are SO SMALL.

Yichang is on the Yangtze River and down from the site of the construction of the largest dam in the world. Started in 1992 and expected to be completed in 2009, the dam will be 500 feet tall and nearly 1.5 miles across. Unfortunately, it will flood some of the most beautiful gorges in China, some say in the world. Having taken a hydrofoil boat trip down one of these gorges to the dam, I can personally attest to the beauty of the gorges, the sad-



Kitchen of physics professor. Middle income. House 400 years old.

ness of their loss forever and the absolute immenseness of the dam. To just say it is huge is an understatement. You have to see it to believe it. There isn't a photo that can really do it justice. No one had a panorama camera which was needed to take everything in. 28,000 people are working around the clock to complete this project. The government is already building new cities above the planned flood area for the people to move to. Once completed, this will provide power for 15% of China's needs. There are hundreds of smaller dams in China, all trying desperately to meet the ever growing needs of the people.

Suzhou, an hour's drive from Shanghai, is the "Venice" of the east. It is filled with canals. It is also filled with gardens. They consider this one of their small cities...only 4 million people. They have a technical development center that is a cooperative between the government of China and the government of Singapore. Many familiar names on huge manufacturing plants were seen such as L'Oreal, Smith Kline Pharmaceuticals, Samsung, Makita, etc. Beautification efforts include the planting of thousands of trees, shrubs and flowers along all roadways. All work is done by hand, naturally since they have such an abundance of workforce.

Suzhou is also the silk capitol of China. Farmers sell the cocoons to the factories, which spin this beautiful strong fiber into quilts, scarves, shirts, ties and some of the most beautiful tapestries in the world. Some of these art pieces take one worker, who sews these by hand with a needle and silk threads, over two years to complete. The through and through embroidery artwork (pictures on both sides) do command a high price. We saw some for over \$30,000 (American). We watched a number of

these artists at their stations, chatting with one another, oblivious of our presence and sewing away with simply a photo as their guide. Question, how many mulberry leaves does one silk worm eat in its lifetime of 30 days? Answer = 1 kilogram. Question, how many twin cocoons does it take to make one regular sized quilt? Answer = 15,000.

Although the government still controls the media, the Internet has opened the doors to the world for those Chinese that can afford computers or have access to them. This group wants what others in the world already have. Cell phones are a hot commodity and everyone wants to have one. Some of the cities have several of "our" fast food restaurants. McDonalds, Colonel Sanders Kentucky Fried Chicken and Subway were noted in two of the cities we toured. Shanghai already has 80 McDonalds with another 20 under construction. A big hit with the Shanghai folks is Starbucks. This is the new "in" thing but has yet to get into other cities. There is yet to be one coffee shop in Suzhou yet this is supposed to be the "technical center" with advanced knowledge. Anyone have some spare change to invest?

Suzhou also has a furniture mart that is unmatched anywhere. It is literally blocks long in every direction and all the stores are two levels of merchandise. The furniture styles vary from Victorian, to contemporary, to lotus flower-shaped chairs to seven-foot tall ornate chairs that look like they belonged to an Emperor (well, a tall one that is). Leather, wood, steel, Plexiglas...you name it, it was there. The quality appeared to be excellent and the prices were unreal. A coffee table that would have cost \$1200 in the States was selling for \$200. One person was planning to buy some chairs for her bedroom. She left because she was "overwhelmed." There was TOO much to choose from. This occurrence, from a group that I thought set a world's record on shopping, was a major statement on how amazing this mart really was.

China may have once built walls around their country (the Great Wall is awesome) and every city, but the walls are now open and they are moving forward with greater speed than most people realize. There is tremendous opportunity in this new China. We can just sit back and watch or become part of the action.

Delegating in Small Businesses

While delegating is a fact of life in large businesses and corporations, it is not always so easy with small companies. When you are a one person show, delegating is impossible, unless your dog is extremely good with the phones. Even with a few employees, it always seems easier to "do it yourself" because it will take more time to tell someone how to get something done than to just do it yourself. Right? Well, not so according to Kevin Kellegan who writes articles to help small businesses.

Kellegan (BusinessProfile, August 2002) states that in order to grow a small business, you **have** to delegate. His first principle is to delegate from the bottom. You start with relatively easy tasks that someone in your office or factory could do BUT not don't just delegate "scut" work. Delegate work that will help your employees grow, work that requires some responsibility and decision-making, however limited. As you offload tasks to others, you can take on more challenging tasks that can enhance your bottom line. If you don't have employees, consider outsourcing.

Three tips for delegating are offered.

1. Delegate with a twist. Use diplomacy and engender a sincere desire in your staff to assume more responsibility by getting them excited to grow the company and make it a success.
2. Set up a goof-proof feedback system. Set up a "delegation or task sheet." Have a column for date or time of completion. Have staff turn in the form when the project is done. If you have multiple employees, you may want to consider color coded forms or even astro-bright colored forms to indicate the importance of the delegated task. Colored forms can also help you track your projects or provide assistance (or evaluation) to those with stacks of such forms still sitting on a desk. The goal is to get those forms back within the expected time frame and quality work completed. Offer praise with each returned form with job well done.
3. Practice self-restraint. If you provide clear directions on the project to be done, avoid stepping in to micromanage. Mistakes will be made, but accept this as part of growth and learn from them. Good employees will learn, too, and will try harder to avoid making the same kind of mistake in the future.

Dumb Laws Still on the Books!

(Per request of members...more being provided. Future issues will contain more state dumb laws, international dumb laws or a new section on dumb facts, etc.)

Iowa

A man with a moustache may never kiss a woman in public. Tanning bed facilities must warn of the risk of getting a sunburn.

Minnesota

The land of 10,000 lakes declares mosquitos a public nuisance. Citizens may not enter Wisconsin with a chicken on their head.

Michigan

It is legal for a robber to file a law suit, if he or she got hurt in your house.

It is illegal to kill a dog using a decompression chamber.

Nebraska

It is illegal for a mother to give her daughter a perm without a state license.

It is illegal to go whale fishing.

North Dakota— Fargo

One may be jailed for wearing a hat while dancing, or even for wearing a hat to a function where dancing is taking place.

South Dakota

Movies that show police officers being struck, beaten, or treated in an offensive manner are forbidden.

Wisconsin

It is illegal to throw rocks at a railroad car.

It is illegal to kiss on a train.

Thanks again to www.dumblaws.com

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