



NCHPBA

U P D A T E

BURNING NEWS & ISSUES



Affiliated with the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association

February 2004

A Note from the President



COLD—SNOW—COLD—SNOW—!! Seems it will never end. Pipe dope freezing before you can use it on pipe threads, roof asphalt shingles as brittle as glass, tools freezing to your gloves, shoveling snow just to get around the home to install the horizontal terminations cap, not to mention just getting to the job site itself! Then there's the service vehicle starting or not, getting stuck, or you've got to love those steep mile long driveways that are ice covered...

...but hey, business is good!

Profit margins take a hit in this kind of weather. The amount of time for the installs and service calls take compared to having temperature above 30 degrees F is increased. And so is the chance of injury, in the vehicle and out of it.

In our region this time of year, when we have a clear blue sky with abundant sunshine, it certainly helps the attitude. We

can all use more sunshine in our lives. Dull gray skies bring on sour attitudes if you let them. Kind of takes the fun out of your work.

Cold and snow: this, too shall end. Another year is here and spring is on its way. Now is our chance to implement those new ideas. If you don't have any you are sure of, attend the HPBA EXPO. But, most of all, attend the NCHPBA spring conference this year at Treasure Island near Red Wing, Minnesota. The date is May 23-25. Owners, managers, service techs, manufacturer reps, sales staff, HPBA staff and qualified NFI instructors will all be there. Service seminars, and business seminars will be available. Having the opportunity to visit with everyone is worth much more than the cost of attending. The education one receives networking with these industry people is invaluable. The seminars are first rate also. So...plan on attending.

One thing to remember: some folks won't ask for advice for fear of giving the impression they need it.

Denny Hildebrand

Strategic Planning

Last September the Board of NCHPBA began the process to develop a Strategic Plan for the association. They have now gone the step further to finish the program Action Plans and develop the administrative plan to support all the activities. It is their intent to have the Strategic Plan for 2004 printed for all those that attend the Spring Meeting in Red Wing. This plan is dynamic. It will change as the need arises. Every three to five

years, the Plan will undergo a thorough review and a new 3-5 year plan developed.

This type of process will help NCHPBA be more responsive to its members and be better able to meet all the needs of this growing association. Look for the Plan at the Annual Meeting in Red Wing this May.

Scam, Spam—or just plain Junk

Homes and businesses alike get junk mail, unwanted phone solicitors, emails and even cold callers all the time. Some states have adopted "no phone call" lists. The federal government has just instituted an email anti-spam plan for all those unwanted emails that number in the millions. It has been said that enforcement will be a nightmare.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has also tried to tighten up regulations regarding faxing. This new Rule however, is causing problems for associations. We believe that via membership, each member consents to getting information from the association such as programs, events and other pertinent offerings. Associations believe this to be an "established business relationship." The FCC now thinks that is not so and as of January, 2005, a written letter must be on file from all members that allows any faxing of information. This interpretation

by the FCC is being challenged but associations are also taking steps to comply, should the challenge be lost.

NCHPBA does not routinely fax information to members. We are very cognizant of the costs for members to receive faxes. We still use the ground mail for most notifications. We will want to utilize the email and web page more for communications. However, we must keep the fax option open at the present.

The 2004 dues statement included a space for members to provide the written permission to fax. This information is being recorded separately in the database and therefore only those that have given the permission will be faxed. At present, there is approximately a 70% affirmative response rate for allowing faxing in 2005. If you don't remember whether you provided permission, contact the office. A response form will be sent. Sorry—it cannot be faxed.

Insurance Task Force

Three affiliates, North Central, Arizona and Canada, are spearheading an effort to research the problems of obtaining liability/E&O insurance for members. Members from these affiliates as well as others have made calls to the affiliate offices with stories of having their liability insurance dropped or getting notices of renewal premiums with double or triple the rates. Inquires into these situations have not produced evidence that substantive claims would have warranted the increases.

Staff of these affiliates as well as staff of the National Chimney Sweeps Guild are contacting insurance companies, and will soon be conducting research as part of the initiative. One need is to ascertain the scope of the problem. Data is needed to substantiate the issues with these insurance companies. Anecdotes are not enough. Currently a survey is being developed. We will need your feedback. When you get the survey, complete it as fully as possible and return it to the NCHPBA office. Your assistance is critical in this process. Hard evidence is needed. You can help.

Barbecue Lifestyle, Usage, and Attitude Study 2003

HBPA has recently delivered the results of the national and regional findings of the Barbecue lifestyle, usage and attitude surveys. Fifteen thousand surveys were mailed in July 2003 with a 68% response rate.

National results indicate that 72% of households own an outdoor barbecue grill or smoker. This represents a 4% decrease from the 2001 survey. The LP gas grill continues to be the most popular with 63% use while charcoal is at 47%.

National and regional data reveals results on the types of households that purchase and use grills, age and sex of users and even income levels for types of grillers. Anyone who is selling grills and is a member of the association can obtain a copy

The Task Force is also brainstorming other avenues to help members with insurance issues. Education will be a key component. We will keep you informed as we progress with this vital concern.

The Task Force is also researching the issue of riders to homeowners insurance with solid fuel burning appliances. This seems to vary across our area with some reports from members of no extra costs to more than \$100.00 for a wood or pellet stove. North Central staff was contacted by the State of Wisconsin Department of Administration Energy Office to inquire into this problem as well. It seems their office has been getting complaints from citizens regarding having to pay more to insure their stoves.

North Central believes insurance issues for members and homeowners is a major member need that has to be addressed. Energies will be put into both of these issues. Again, we are working for you!

of both the national and regional findings by calling the office. A CD can be sent if you have the right software, or a copy of the research will be mailed. The national survey is over 150 pages while the regional data is just under 100 pages.

Of no surprise to us in the "Upper Midwest" as our regional data describes, is that we lead the nation in using grills more than anywhere else for "tailgating" activities. Need we say more!



Hot Glass Doors

Last spring NCHPBA published an article about burns to children touching the hot glass doors of gas fireplaces. The Board recently learned about more television coverage on that same topic, hearing that one burn center had 12 children with third degree burns in one year from touching these glass doors.

EXPO 2004

Trade Show and Education Programs are coming up soon. Sign up now to see the new products, talk about the old ones and learn more and more about technologies, sales, and

An intense discussion ensued regarding liabilities, lawsuits, product stewardship and prevention of injuries. The result was that this topic needed to be fully addressed at the spring meeting. There will be a membership forum on Tuesday morning. Aspects of this topic and many others will be on the agenda—all to help us be better managers of our businesses.

business practices. Enclosed is a program booklet. Don't miss out. Be there!

Midwest Renewable Energy Fair 2004

NCHPBA took two booths at the MREA Energy Fair in 2003 in an effort to enhance the visibility of the association and provide education to consumers about all of our products. Gary Stanley, Bob Marcell and Lynn Meyer took the lead on this effort. A number of members from the area helped staff the booth the three days of the event.

This year the current plan is to have one booth but provide a variety of education offerings to attendees. It was noted that the education tents were always packed and this would be a way to really address the issue of alternate fuels,

the house as a system, indoor air quality and all the various aspects of use and maintenance of all our products. The MREA Energy Fair boasts three levels of education from beginner to advanced—all in the one weekend. The more people know, the more they will tell others to get involved with hearth products. We will keep you informed. If you are available to help with the booth or training, contact Gary, Bob, Lynn or the office immediately. The dates are June 18-20, 2004 in Custer, Wisconsin.

Mystery Shopping 2004

Consistency of Business Practices!

All of you that participated in the Mystery Shopping program during 2004 should have received their individual store report from Bare Associates International as well as a national and regional summary from HPBA. While our regional data exceeded the averages of national, there still is room for improvement.

NCHPBA will be offering the program again in 2004. We are going to try to afford you opportunity to get shopped during various times of the year. We will have to charge you a bit more for each shop this year, but will still underwrite the coordination activities to help keep your costs down. Got a great score last year? Want to know if that is a consistent result or a fluke? Got a bad score? Hopefully that was just a bad day, but if not, you had better find out now! Well, you won't know unless you get shopped more than once.

Over six pages of questions are asked. Every aspect of the business is evaluated from phone techniques, to store fronts, to signage, to dust, to knowledge, to friendliness, to layout, to

closings and much much more. Those that were shopped will want to do this again. Those that did not should definitely take advantage of this member benefit. Per store mystery shops are discounted because of the volume of membership participation. Don't miss out on this. Notices will be sent out soon.

John Bergstrom is a huge supporter of this program. He cites this is worth the value of membership alone. He also says that getting shopped every year and multiple times a year gets you the information you need to attain and maintain consistency of business practices.

You can't just advertise your products. You need to sell yourselves and your staff that YOU are there to help. Sometimes what we think is happening and what is really happening are two completely different things. Mystery shopping gets you real information. If you have a budget to advertise, you better budget for mystery shopping so you are really selling what you say you are!

Affordable Comfort

Sounds like a great thing—comfort at an affordable price, right? Well, this is also the name of the convention to be held in Minneapolis April 26-May 1, 2004. This is a haven for what we call the "gatekeepers". The program is geared to affordable housing staff and contractors, builders, building performance contractors, code officials, green building champions, health professionals, home inspectors, HVAC contractors insulation contractors, multifamily champions, policy makers, program managers, residential remodelers and weatherization staff.

The convention hosts exhibits and education programs covering technical aspects on how to remodel, repair, build and diagnose homes so they perform their best and save energy.

NCHPBA will send two representatives to this event this year, to ascertain whether it would be beneficial to sponsor a booth or speaker at future events. Again, this will help get the word out about our great products. If we don't talk about ourselves, who will?

Building Officials Manuals

NCHPBA has obtained the newly published Building Officials Manuals for sales for members and building officials. Copies can be obtained through the office or through NFI directly. Each manual sells for \$49.95 a piece or \$89.90 for a set. Shipping

and handling is another \$8.00 ground rate. If you want other than the ground rate, please call the office for costs. All orders will be processed within 48 hours of receipt.

Spring in Red Wing

We are going back to Treasure Island in Red Wing, Minnesota. We are going back for the great golf course at Mississippi National, for the beautiful dinner cruise on the Mississippi, for the great room rates, for the excellent food and service par none. We are going back for another great education program. One member wrote—"your programs just keep on getting better and better".

This year we will be offering something new for all. We plan a reception on Monday evening with the food cooked on various grills by our barbecue manufacturers. Unusual tantalizing hors d'oeuvres will be served with demonstrations how you can better sell grills to your customers.

We are also going to offer an NFI Gas Review Course and Exam on Tuesday, May 25, 2004. Again, we are doing this for you. Topics to date include the following: Troubleshooting—gas venting systems; What's in my Truck?; Phone Service Calls—Do's and Don'ts; Smoke: It's not my stove's fault!; Service Can be Profitable; Demonstrating and selling grills; Alternative



"Spirit of the Water" Treasure Island yacht.

Fuels—Selling the Choices; Perspectives from the other side; and Sales Management Techniques.

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