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SMACNA & SMWIA — Building A Future Together FALL 2005



Service Work Training

SMACNA



HVAC EXPERTISE
COMMISSIONING • MAINTENANCE • TROUBLESHOOTING

Partners Conference '06

—See pages 9-12

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NEWS AND SHORTS

Open Shop Pay Scale Data

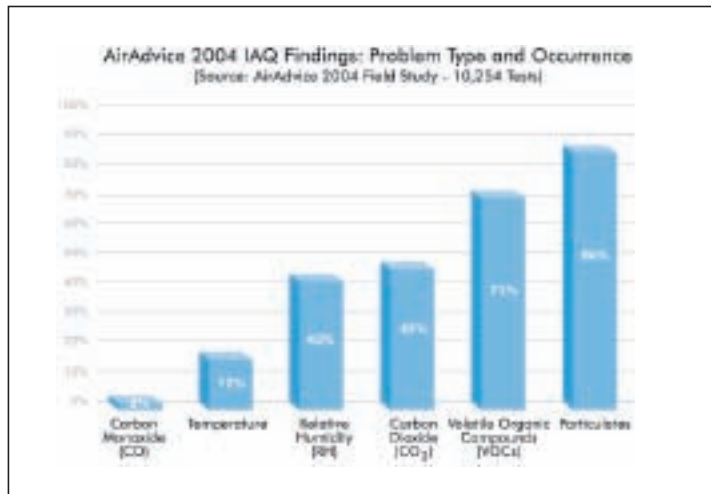
Cockshaw's Construction Labor News+Opinion, a 34-year-old newsletter, recently offered detailed data on open shop wages and fringes for construction craft workers. Here are national average data on HVAC and sheet metal workers:

HVAC mechanics: 1st year wages and fringes, \$14.48. Third-year: \$19.38. Helpers, \$14.08. "Top" journeymen, \$27.47.

Sheet metal workers: 1st year wages and fringes, \$14.12. Third-year: \$18.05. Helpers: \$13.68. "Top" journeymen: \$25.99.

For comparison, here are the 11-craft averages: 1st year wages and fringes: \$14.17. Third-year: \$19.14. Helpers: \$15.06. "Top" journeymen: \$26.56.

96% Of Homes Have IAQ Problems



In a study over 10,000 homes, the firm Air Advice claims that 96% of home tested "suffered an IAQ alert in at least one of six areas." See the release at www.airadvice.com.

IEQ Recommendations

A study conducted by the National Institute of Buildings Sciences makes specific recommendations on indoor environmental quality. You can read and download the report at <http://ieq.nibs.org>. Here are only a few of the specific recommendations:

Provide direct exhaust from rooms and areas that have pollutant-generating sources or activities. These include bathrooms, kitchens and office kitchenettes, copy and print rooms, and computer rooms.

Ductwork—some common sense recommendations:

- "Avoid insulation inside ductwork. Use external insulation wrap of non-friable (airborne particle creating) material."
- "Oil coatings used in fabrication of sheet metal stock can affect air quality. Prior to installation, thoroughly clean ductwork with a low VOC product. Use methods that do not leave residue or cause oxidation."

Prohibit use of fragrances and disinfectants in air distribution systems.

Maintain relative humidity between 30%-50%.

Locate outside air louvers away from pollutant sources. ■

STANDARDS SET, STANDARDS MET

A lesson learned from the
San Francisco area:

*Two voices aren't
necessarily better
than one!*

By Fred Anderson

QUALITY.
CRAFTSMANSHIP.
DEDICATION.

www.standardssetstandardsmet.com



A

diversity tends to either fortify or destroy relationships.

“In 2001, industry hours had declined to about 6.2 million, from an all-time high of 7.1 million in 2000,” says Gary Schwenk, executive vice president of the Bay Area SMACNA Chapter. “Projections were that hours would continue to drop.”

SMWIA and SMACNA were each running their own (uncoordinated) advertising campaigns. When national leadership from both organizations visited the area, they encouraged Local 104 and the local SMACNA chapter to work together toward increasing market share.

It didn't take long to fortify the labor-management relationship. “We realized it would be a better message—and have more of an impact on our end-users—if we were preaching together,” says Bruce Word, business manager of Local 104 SMWIA.

Step Two

Agreeing to work together was the first step. Next, the two organizations had to sit down, choose a slogan, and start moving forward. “It was a learning curve for both of us,” Word recalls.

After many presentations, interviews, and long discussions, SMWIA and SMACNA together chose a marketing agency and a slogan. The marketing team's members were:

- Schwenk;
- Joseph Maraccini, Local 104 financial secretary;
- Bob Tuck, Atlas Heating and Air Conditioning Co., Oakland; and
- Jim Conway, Bay Area SMACNA director of labor relations.

“Standards Set, Standards Met” emphasized the SMWIA-SMACNA team's strength in setting standards for sheet metal work and in training union workers to consistently meet or exceed those standards. It was launched in May 2004 at Industry Week.

All Local 104 members and many employees of Bay Area SMACNA firms received branded materials—including hard hats, travel mugs, posters, and bumper stickers.

In addition, the team launched a “Standards Set, Standards Met” Web site to help prospects find SMACNA firms employing Local 104 members.

Follow-Up

Going further, the team compiled lists of persons who made or influenced decisions on HVAC and sheet metal work—including owners, facility managers, general contractors, and city officials. These potential customers received campaign brochures and branded coasters.

Radio spots followed (a few months later)—reinforcing the theme. Additionally, members of both industry groups handed out campaign information at career fairs, local trade shows, and construction industry meetings.

Has it worked? The Bay Area SMACNA-SMWIA team's Fall 2005 plans are to hire a business-



development person. “We’ve made a splash with the media campaign,” Word observes. “Now we have to follow up and close the deal in person.”

One task for this new hire will be to contact local technical libraries, ensuring that they have updated manuals that specify SMACNA standards for sheet metal and HVAC projects.

Feedback

While it’s difficult to know exactly what effect the campaign has had, Word is positive about it. “I know we’re getting feedback from non-signatory contractors. They’ve told us, ‘I’m impressed. It’s good to see that labor and management are working together.’”

He says that when it comes to the campaign, time will tell. “This is something that will take probably a minimum of five years before we start to see significant, tangible returns.”

But—right now—some 5,000 people throughout the Bay Area are wearing one tangible result of the program.

“When you go to job sites, or see pictures of work crews,” Schwenk says, “you’ll see a lot of white hats with the ‘Standards Set, Standards Met’ logo on them. That’s been a huge success.” ■

ANDERSON, A FORMER TRADE MAGAZINE EDITOR, IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND MARKETING COMMUNICATION CONSULTANT IN BETTENDORF, IOWA.



Standards Set, Standards Met Site –
www.standardssetstandardsmet.com



Bay Area SMACNA Site –
www.bayareasmacna.org

Local 104, SMWIA Site –
www.smw104.org





Creating Residential Success Stories

By Fred Anderson

★ In Philadelphia, union members and signatory contractors are working together to reclaim residential HVAC service and retrofit work. ★

Philadelphia has put a positive twist on a familiar story, a twist made possible by an uncommon partnership.

“Many years ago, when Philadelphia neighborhoods were growing, blocks and blocks—hundreds of homes—would go up at once, and union sheet metal workers did all the work,” recalls Joe Sellers, business manager of Local 19.

“As the residential market slowed down, we let it slip away.”

Adds Rich Borradaile, owner of Thermodesign Corp. (Philadelphia): “Originally, we did a little bit of residential and a little bit of commercial. Now we are doing only commercial work. It’s been more than 20 years since we’ve done housing of any type.”

Philadelphia wasn’t necessarily unusual. Across the country, as of 2003, union-signatory sheet metal contractors accounted for only 3% of total residential HVAC service and retrofit revenues, according to a National Energy Management Institute study.

But something has changed in The City of Brotherly Love!

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A Long Way To Go

“We are slowly turning this record around,” says William F. Reardon, chapter executive of the Sheet Metal Contractors Association of Philadelphia and Vicinity. “But put the emphasis on slowly. We have a long way to go before we regain our former market share.”

Behind this turn-around is the Sheet Metal Industry Advancement Committee (SMIAC). “Both the union and the association are trying to expand markets—from housing to public works. They encourage contractors to stretch beyond their comfort zones,” Borradaile explains.

“In the early 2000s,” Sellers recalls, “We could foresee another spike in residential construction.” SMIAC started focusing on

that growth in its Youth-to-Youth organizing program.

“When the time came, we were able to go into residential shops and show them that Local 19 had the necessary training,” Sellers says.

Stealing From St. Louis

Philadelphia’s progress gained impetus from a partnership conference sponsored by SMWIA and SMACNA. “After listening to Dave Zimmermann and ‘Butch’ Welsch, we felt positive about going after the replacement market,” Sellers says.

Zimmerman is president and business manager of Local 36. Welsch is president of Welsch Heating & Cooling Co. Both are based in St. Louis.

SMIAC invited both men to town for a breakfast meeting, to talk about market expansion. Also invited: All local union contractors.

“Contractors obviously saw the potential in residential, and they wanted to go after it as much as we did,” Sellers says. “We jointly created a plan to go after the residential market. It took a lot of time and an awful lot of work, but we continue to go after that market.”

Several new programs resulted. To stimulate the market, the group worked with an air-handling distributor to create a replacement program. Customers received a rebate when they checked and cleaned their air-handling systems. Additional rebates were available for replacing systems.

As a result of such efforts, Borradaile and his company looked for opportunities to pursue the residential market. “We knew the union would help us in such efforts,” he says.

Opportunity Comes A-Knocking

Success stories are encouraging, of course.

- For Thermodesign, opportunity came in the form of a 100-unit housing project. “A GC familiar with our capabilities in the commercial market requested that we submit a bid. We won the project,” Borradaile says.

- At TCS Heating and Air Conditioning, co-owner John Burke notes that, “With assurance from the union that could supply us with any residential workers we needed, we had the impetus to try something new. They definitely facilitated the process.” A national builder came to the company after being unable to get a job done to the satisfaction of a customer. “The builder came in, looked at our facility, and was impressed,” Burke says. Two jobs resulted.

Such progress arose from the inspiration provided by the St. Louis model and from a strong commitment to a jointly managed training program, Sellers says.

“We just set up a residential committee for training that will be reviewing our entire curriculum on residential training,” he adds. “We’ve had residential training for many, many years, but it’s time to see how can we modify the program and be ready for tomorrow’s needs.”

Training Ahead Of The Curve

Provisions in a recent contract underscored the importance of training. Contractors were required to send residential apprentices to school one day every two weeks, and pay them for the time. “It educates them and gives them a sense of pride in what they’re doing,” Burke says.

Working together with contractors has allowed Local 19’s membership to grow, which has increased the amount of residential work contractors could do, which increases the need for more workers. “Over the past 2-1/2 years, the residential sector been predominantly responsible for our growth in Local 19,” Sellers says.

“There is a tremendous amount of housing work out there,” Burke says. “It’s getting ready to break wide open.”

“Now we are looking at the replacement sector, because that’s what will be happening tomorrow,” Sellers says. “We’ve got to be training ahead of the curve, so that when that work hits, we can provide the manpower.”

Market expansion plans don’t stop with residential work. “In addition to housing, we’re trying to expand into the public sector—state and federal work,” Borradaile says.

“Without cooperation between labor and management we wouldn’t be able to successfully enter new markets,” Burke concludes. ■

ANDERSON IS AN IOWA-BASED FREELANCE WRITER.

‘With assurance from the union that could supply us with any residential workers we needed, we had the impetus to try something new.’

The Partners In Progress Conference

March 29 – April 1
Las Vegas



seeing the future,

Leading the Way

Take a Hard Look at What Your Future May Hold





your chance to see the future— **With 20-20**

Come to Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas in late March, meet with other members of the SMWIA-SMACNA team, and get up-to-speed—fast!—on where our industry is headed.

With our theme, "Seeing The Future, Leading The Way," a compact three-day agenda is set, as follows:

Wednesday, March 29 – registration.

Thursday, March 30 – a day of Partners conference breakout meetings, presented under the heading of "Emerging Markets & Industry Trends." There's plenty from which to choose! Evening: The ITI Apprenticeship Contest Awards reception & dinner.

Friday, March 31 – a general session featuring perspective from project owners and general contractors, followed by afternoon breakouts.

Saturday, April 1 – we close with important general sessions.

SMACNA and SMWIA have scheduled this compact event to maximize your options. ITI's 34th International Apprentice Contest will be held March 27-30, in Las Vegas—come for both events or choose one!

See registration form on back page of insert.

Key Future-Oriented Sessions

Several general sessions are planned, with the following topics scheduled to be covered:

- The Future of Sheet Metal Construction
- Future developments from the Owners' perspective—speakers include building owners and the construction users.
- Perspective from general contractors.
- Will the future see more union mergers?
- Challenges and market opportunities we face in the changing composition of the U.S. Workforce.

A Must Attend For—

contractors
chapter executives
local leaders
decisions makers
business managers
agents/organizers
new or future owners and managers
JATC training coordinators
committee members

Foresight!



Emerging Markets & Industry Trends

Thursday, March 30 is set up as a special day of workshops, all coming under the “Emerging Markets & Industry Trends” heading. See below for breakout session topics scheduled for this day.

Why We All Need This Conference

Shaping the landscape of tomorrow’s union sheet metal construction industry requires leadership, change, trust, dedication and hard work. New ideas come with risk and reward. There are no magic solutions, but lots of opportunities if labor and management are not afraid to remove their blinders and take a hard look at what the future may hold.

Conference Schedule

Thursday, March 30

“Emerging Markets & Industry Trends”

Sessions

8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

- Using HVAC Certifications
- Legal/Accounting Tools For Your JATC
- Project Specifications/HVAC Opportunities
- Residential Service and Retrofit Market Tools (all day session)
- Fit for Life: Protecting Your Most Important Asset
- Lean Production
- Tools for Recruiting the Future Workforce
- Plus Others

Evening:

6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

- Conference Opening Ceremony
- 34th ITI Apprenticeship Contest Awards Reception and Dinner

Friday, March 31

8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

General Session Topics

- Future of Sheet Metal Construction
- Owners/General Contractors—Serving Your Customers; Meeting Their Needs

Breakout Topics:

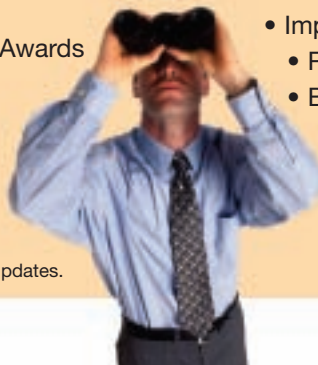
- Promoting Continuous Training and Career Opportunities
- Implementing More Effective Healthcare and Workers’ Compensation Plans

Saturday, April 1

8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

General Session Topics

- Impact of Union Mergers on the Industry
 - Recruiting Your Most Important Asset
 - Best Practice Market Expansion Efforts



CERTIFICATION: On-Ramp To Success

Specialty training offers a promising road for sheet metal workers and the contractors who employ them.

By A. Lee Chichester

In the mid-1980s, Victor Comforte—founder and former chairman of Climatemp Inc. in Chicago—told an apprentice sheet metal worker that the future of the industry was whole systems testing and balancing.

Twenty years later, his words seem prophetic.

According to *The Future for Union Sheet Metal Construction*, the industry's future is in jeopardy unless its approach shifts from simple duct-hanging to one where the sheet metal work develops “whole system understanding.”

This report, published in 2005, was based on a two-year study by New Horizons Foundation. It describes **whole system understanding** as a condition where workers are systems specialists who can install, check the operations of, and maintain air handling systems of all types serving all functions.

If your first thought when you hear or read “certification” is TABB (or TAB), you're partially correct. Testing, Adjusting, and Balancing is just one of many specialty certifications available to today's sheet metal workers and contractors (see abbreviated list in Table One).

continued on page 16

You Think There Are Just 3 – But We Have 17 Certifications

At present, the SMWIA-SMACNA team has 17 certifications for sheet metal workers that are:

- Available now;
- Coming soon;
- Now being updated; or
- Being created/reviewed by special task forces.

See pages 14 and 15 for a table that provides brief details on each of these certifications, from Commissioning to Residential Service & Retrofit.

Table One

Prove & Certify Your Expertise—Earn One (or

Certification	Status	Description
Commissioning	Coming Soon	Developed to meet the needs of building owners and designers, the new TABB building commissioning certification will be available this year.
Energy Management	Upgraded	An updated technician-level energy management certification test has been developed and is available to qualified individuals. The test will be based on information available through the ITI environmental modules and field experience.
Filtration	In Task Force	A NEMI Task Force is developing the criteria for certification in filtration. As HVAC systems become more and more advanced technologically, so do the filtration systems. End users are asking that technicians who service these vital components of the system be trained and qualified to perform the work.
Fume Hoods	In Development	A certification in demand by customers in private industry and government research work.
HVAC Mechanic	Available Now	Industry recognition of the high-quality HVAC training an individual has received through apprenticeship.
HVAC Technician	Available Now	Recognizing the advancement of an HVAC mechanic who has taken the next step to become an entry-level HVAC service technician. Includes successfully passing the ARI industry competency exam.
HVAC Master Mechanic	Available Now	Recognizing supreme qualifications and commitment to delivering system diagnostics and service. Includes successfully passing the NATE core and two disciplines.
IAQ	Upgraded	NEMI's technician certification of IAQ technicians has been upgraded. This keeps our contractors and technicians recognized as the most qualified to meet the building community's needs.
Moisture Management	In Task Force	A NEMI Task Force has been formed to examine delivery of a Moisture Management service to building owners. Proper control of moisture migration in a building can assist building owners in mitigating the risk of mold growth. Our industry has the expertise to address humidity within a building through proper service and maintenance of environmental systems. Expertise also exists to affirm that the building envelope (i.e., roof and architectural metals) is installed properly to prevent moisture incursion.

More) of These SMWIA-SMACNA Certifications

Certification	Status	Description
Sound & Vibration	Available Now	The International Certification Board has developed a certification in sound and vibration (S&V) that combines work-study using the new SMACNA S&V Manual.
TABB Technicians	Available Now	ITI (SMARTA and TABIC) technician certifications are recognized by TABB as being the best certifications available in the world today for technicians who perform air and hydronic balancing of building environmental systems.
TABB Supervisors	Available Now	TABB's certification process for Supervisors of Testing, Adjusting, and Balancing Companies was developed to assure engineers, architects, and building owners that the TABB program is the "Professional's Choice."
TABB Contractors	Available Now	TABB's certification process for Contractors was streamlined to ensure the highest level of service to qualified contractors while keeping uniformity in the process. TABB's certification process assures the building community of receiving the best-qualified team, from technician to supervisor, for customer satisfaction.
BioSafety Cabinet	Task Force Being Formed	Biological safety cabinets are the primary means of containment for working safely with infectious microorganisms. A task force is currently being formed to study a program to certify builders and inspectors of these cabinets.
Life Safety Systems Verification & Validation	In Task Force	Because some inspections of fire dampers and stairwell pressurizations are not being performed by qualified individuals, a task force is developing certification guidelines for the accurate reporting and documentation of inspections. Proper inspections as well as documentation of qualified inspections will help reduce risk to building occupants and firefighters during emergencies.
IAQ for Schools	Task Force Being Formed	Indoor air quality is a significant issue in public schools due to the peculiarities of that environment and the ages of many of the buildings. A task force is being formed to create a program to certify a school-specific IAQ curriculum.
Residential Service & Retrofit	In Task Force	The task force is studying potential residential markets to determine what capital entry requirements are needed for contractors, the potential revenue to be derived from an aggressive move into the market, the potential man-hours of work to be gained by such a move, and what benchmarks should be set to measure success in entering this new market. It will also design a market entry plan.

continued from page 13

Obviously, a quick look at the table (on page 14 and 15) shows that the SMWIA-SMACNA team has created many certifications beyond the activities of TABB (www.tabbcertified.org).

But there's even more to the story.

Adding Value

Certifications gain enormous value when they are in demand. SMACNA and SMWIA have worked to create such demand!

"Since Jan. 1, our certifications have been recognized in 95 new sets of specifications among architects and engineers," says Erik Emblem, executive director of the National Energy Management Institute (NEMI – www.nemionline.org).

"Such recognition offers an automatic marketing tool for contractors dealing with engineers and architects."

Demand for specialized training is continually increasing, and NEMI is filling it. There is a "virtuous circle" here—as more certifications are created, and more sheet metal workers earn the various certifications...and more customers demand certified workers.

One thing is certain: Our abbreviated table might not be current shortly after you read this article. *Why not?* NEMI staffers are tackling one type of in-demand specialization after another, working up policies and the curricula for the next programs to come on line.

"We're working on Life Safety Systems Certification now," Emblem says. "This training will include qualification for fire damper inspections (see separate story) that could literally revolutionize the industry."

However, policies and curricula can only go so far. The next step is to get people into the new programs and certified.

"Our industry is demanding a total systems perspective. We have the training resources that can deliver. However, we now need to reach out to 55,000 members who are already trained—working in the marketplace in the old worldview—and get them into the new millennium." ■

CHICHESTER, BASED IN VIRGINIA, WRITES FREQUENTLY FOR PARTNERS IN PROGRESS.

market opportunity:

No One Is Qualified To Inspect Fire Dampers

When a building's fire dampers fail, smoke and gas from a fire can "infect" an entire building by running through the air exchange ductwork.

Such a scenario happened in the 1980 fire at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Dampers *were* installed on the system; safety codes *required* them. The dampers *were* in the plans. Installed dampers *had been* inspected—because the National Fire Protection Association requires it.

Despite all of that, toxic smoke from the kitchen managed to funnel into guest rooms. Some hotel guests were found dead, with no fire damage anywhere near them. They had succumbed to toxics in the air (invisible to them).

How could such a failure occur?

Missing: Inspectors

Safety rules require visual inspections of fire dampers at installation and at two years into the life of the system. There is also a requirement for "physical-challenge inspections" at the four-year mark.

But there's a problem. The marketplace has a dreadful shortage of persons qualified to conduct these inspections.

Enter the HVAC specialist. Since both rules and common sense demand competent, thorough inspections of fire dampers and sensors, who better than air systems technicians to conduct those inspections?

With the help of the International Association of Fire Fighters and the Fire Marshals' Training Association, the National Energy Management Institute (NEMI) is developing a certification system for fire damper inspections.

"Life Safety Systems Certification is a technical specialization that allows sheet metal workers to demonstrate they can competently perform these inspections," says Erik Emblem, executive director of NEMI.

"When we roll out our program, technicians will have the skills to issue a report—similar to an elevator inspection report—on fire dampers and sensors in every building in the country.

"This program could open a new market sector for the sheet metal industry, taking the philosophy of 'whole systems specialization' to an entirely new level." ■

Service Work Has Staying Power

Demand for residential and commercial service work continues to grow in St. Louis and Seattle. They're ready. Is your program, too?

By A. Lee Chichester



Fischer Inc./Design Aire Inc. “But this home building boom will slow down eventually. When it takes a downturn, service/add-on/replacement will definitely be our future.”

Dan Andrews, training coordinator at Local Union 36’s training center, says the add-on and replacement portions of the residential sector are just immense. “Service is simply one of those things I believe all sheet metal workers should train for.”

Leveling the Playing Field

St. Louis County enacted an ordinance requiring all commercial HVAC service workers to have a mechanical license. This license may eventually be required for residential service technicians and installers, and it will force most of the contractors in all the trades to upgrade their worker training.

SMWIA-SMACNA also have helped level that playing field between commercial HVAC work and the residential service/replacement field.

“I believe in partnering,” Goldkamp says. “When we undertook this joint marketing and targeting venture, there were a lot of doubts. But partnership between the contractors and our union leadership and workers is key—and here in St. Louis, it’s not just lip service.”

One partnering project sees the local sheet metal partners fund rebates to homeowners who sign HVAC maintenance agreements. “We help residential contractors pay for rebates that homeowners take advantage of,” says Andrews. “We also use our equality fund to keep the wage rate in the residential arena at parity with the commercial rate.”

He says it’s important to maintain the manpower to do the work. “Five years ago, we had 1,500 SMWIA members. Today, we’re at 1,800. About 200 of those workers are doing residential add-on and replacement and service, with about 100 specializing strictly in service,” Andrews says.

Exemplary Training

“The thing I like most about residential service is the variety of the job, and the daily change in pace,” says Joe Kehder, service instructor at the training center. He worked as a service tech for 12 years before becoming a full-time teacher.

In addition to an equipment-rich service lab (it allows technicians to obtain many hours of hands-on experience), the St. Louis program has instituted daytime training. With that, apprentices can choose to learn at times when they are most likely to absorb the material.

“We’ve got between 45 and 50 service apprentices in the program,” Andrews says. “These technicians need to be able to think analytically and have the confidence to properly diagnose and correct problems working solo. They get extensive training in electricity, refrigeration, and trouble-shooting.”

“Service technicians are constantly required to upgrade their training because, with computer-aided controls and other electronic applications, the technology of systems changes rapidly,” Kehder says.

Imagine Columbo as a cop walking the beat. Ridiculous image?

It’s elementary that just as some police officers are more talented at detective work than street patrol, some sheet metal workers make better troubleshooters. For individuals with such talent, there’s an ample, growing marketplace offering a promising career path that is among the best in the industry.

Several regions of the United States are performing bang-up service work. Partners In Progress is on the case, examining residential and commercial service work and training, especially as experienced in St. Louis and western Washington state.

Residential Service Innovation

St. Louis and the surrounding region have experienced a surprisingly long-lived residential construction boom, exceeding all predictions. But longtime sheet metal contractors know that a sag will come.

“Right now, the biggest part of our business is residential installation,” says Jack Goldkamp, one of the owners of Frank

Technology is just one piece; residential service techs also must be able to communicate with customers and put them at ease. Goldkamp puts it this way: The “ideal” residential tech is different things to different customers. Some want lots of hand-holding and explaining, while other customers just want the tech to fix the problem and vacate the premises.

“You really have to have patience with homeowners,” Kehder says. “You’re in their house, and its 100 degrees because their cooling system went out. That can make people act pretty nasty.”

Adds Goldkamp: “The number one attribute for a good residential service tech is the ability to listen. Techs listen to the customer’s description of the problem, and while they are listening, they are diagnosing.”

Goldkamp’s company receives significant amounts of repeat and referral business. Their policy is to send the same tech to the same or similar customers, whenever possible.

Commercial Work

Like residential building systems, commercial buildings require periodic maintenance, on-call troubleshooting, and offer add-on and replacement work. Also like residential techs, commercial service workers love to solve problems.

“I take the most pride in being able to help out customers,” says Burt Ross, a fifth-year commercial service apprentice working with MacDonald-Miller Facility Solutions in Seattle.

“My company usually assigns specific service techs to buildings—so we can stay familiar with their systems and get to know the customers,” Ross says, adding that “I’ve got an office on wheels.”

More and more of western Washington’s SMACNA and signatory contractors are seeing the value of starting up a viable commercial service division.

“As contractors become more involved, we have to generate more techs to meet their needs,” says Jody Robbins, education coordinator for Local 66’s training facilities in western Washington (Lacey and Kirkland).

“In my first year (2002), we had fewer than 10 apprentices in our first-year service class. This year, we have 32 first-year apprentices entering the service training program, which also encompasses TAB Tech training.

“HVAC Service is our fastest-growing program by far.”

Classy Classrooms

Kirkland’s nationally recognized TAB certification training lab provides instruction to apprentices in their final years of training. The facility (in Lacey, Wash.) also offers a lab packed with equipment and control systems. Daytime training schedules are offered here as well.

“Commercial service apprentices are the students who love to work with their hands, and diagnose problems,” says Fred Gault, service instructor at the Lacey training center.

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Residential Service—Web Info Resources

For additional information about service work:

1. Check out www.smw36jatc.org to learn more about St. Louis’ equipment-rich service lab.
2. The International Training Institute for the sheet metal industry (ITI) offers a comprehensive Service Instructor Training curriculum. For more details, visit ITI’s Web site at www.sheetmetal-iti.org. Select Training Catalog>HVAC Service Instructor Programs>Download .pdf course description.
3. See the 2004 presentation from Sheet Metal Industry Week, “Residential Market for HVAC”—download the slides from here: www.pinp.org/files/SMACNA_Residential%20Focus%20Group.pdf.
4. Note that NEMI held a workshop in September titled “Residential Retrofit & Service Management Operations Program.” See the brochure here: www.nemionline.org/download/phoenix.pdf.
5. NEMI’s 151-page “Residential HVAC Market Research” report can be downloaded here: www.nemionline.org/download/hvac/residential_report.pdf.
6. SMACNA’s Residential Report newsletter can be found here: www.smacna.org/council/index.cfm?fuseaction=view_issue&newsletter_id=6.
7. And the Partners In Progress “Residential Resources” Web pages—assembled by the industry’s Market Expansion Task Force—recently made their debut. You’ll find them by clicking on the Residential Resources tab on the left-hand side of this page: www.pinp.org.

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“Seventy percent of the problems wind up being electrical, so we drill a lot on that. These workers need a lot of confidence in the troubleshooting area, and we give them that opportunity.”

Robbins says that of 370 total apprentices in the various programs, 80 are training for commercial service and/or TAB, a figure up from 40 three years ago.

“Without doubt, the best part of the training I’ve received has been the hands-on labs,” Ross says. “The labs have coil units, circulating water pumps, chilled water actuator valves—everything a real building might have. For me, the biggest challenge is pneumatics—the older temperature control systems. They’re complicated.”

“We try to have all types of control systems for the apprentices to work on,” says Gault. “The older styles will still be around for another 15 years, and our techs need to know how to deal with them.”

Partnering for Progress

Seattle’s JATC literally drives the training in the service arena. “We have recently added a Service Project Manager to the committee,” says Robbins. “And the union created a service business representative position.

“We’ve seen a willingness on the parts of both union and contractors to place people with experience in service into key positions to help guide the training.”

A JATC sub-committee meets regularly with instructors to review the service curriculum. “Our JATC is willing to put forth a lot of effort and get us the equipment we need to do the job,” Gault adds.

“They’re great at letting us know what they need the apprentices to know, so the contractors can hire them and be sure they’re qualified.”

Robbins says that communication with employers, journeymen, and supervisors out in the field has been vital to the training offerings.

“I plan to stay with MacDonald-Miller for as long as they’ll have me,” says Ross. “They’ve put me into some



pretty good jobs, and I really like getting to know the customers, solving their problems, doing their maintenance work with confidence. It’s a great career.” ■

CHICHESTER, BASED IN VIRGINIA, WRITES FREQUENTLY FOR PARTNERS IN PROGRESS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS IN THE ORGANIZED CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY. WHEN NOT WRITING, SHE PURSUES AN AVOCATION IN FALCONRY.

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