

# RESIDENTIAL

Volume 6  
No. 1  
April 2001

# REPORT

news and views from SMACNA's National Residential Council

## Residential Contractors Forum To Focus on Energy-Saving Techniques

The residential HVAC contractor has the most influence on a buyer's decision to purchase HVAC components for the home. Contractors that know how to assist their customers and make the most of the sales opportunity will enjoy continued success.



Jay Gordon



John Abbott

This year's Residential Forum entitled "Saving Energy and Providing Value in Homes Today" will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 23 from

See Residential Contractors Forum on page 2

## Finding the Workforce of Tomorrow

## California Program Offers Internships to Students

The lack of new young workers entering the industry is an issue that SMACNA Contractors continue to address with recruiting programs and innovative new ideas. The future growth of the industry requires that new talent join the industry. SMACNA members sharing ideas and successes will assure the industry continues to enjoy this period of growth.

See The Workforce of Tomorrow on page 2

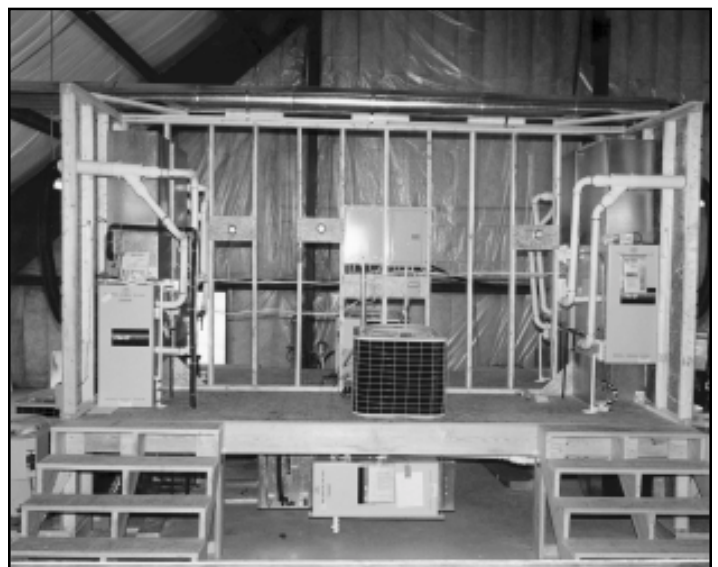
## Indianapolis Training Center Provides Hands-on Experience

Offering hands-on residential training experience is the focus of many courses at the Indianapolis JATC for Local 20. "It's important that you have the trained workers available to perform the jobs," explained Phil Gillespie, executive director of the Sheet Metal Contractors Association of Central Indiana.

Apprentices are required to complete 104 hours in the residential/service training program. The five-year program includes training in basic refrigeration, chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) handling and CFC certification. Apprentices also complete training in gas piping, electrical as well as the center's installation simulator.

The installation simulator offers apprentices an opportunity to acquire the skills necessary for a complete installation of a residen-

See Indianapolis Training Center on page 3



The residential training program offers technicians a hands-on training opportunity.




# Nashville Will Host HVAC COMFORTECH 2001

HVAC COMFORTECH 2001, considered by many residential contractors to be the premiere residential training conference, will be held Sept. 5-8 in Nashville, Tenn.

Sponsored by Contracting Business magazine, COMFORTECH features sessions on sales, business management, marketing and technological trends.

Several sessions are planned to address the staffing shortage facing many contractors. A special panel discussion focusing on attracting and retaining women employees will offer insight into tapping into the female labor market to solve staffing problems. A presentation on flat rate pricing will offer suggestions on how to sell flat rate pricing to your employees and customers. Another session will offer one hundred ideas to improve your bottom line, with moneymaking ideas from contractors around the country.

For more information or to register, call the HVAC COMFORTECH fax-back hotline at 1-800-467-0997 or visit Contracting Business Interactive at [www.contractingbusiness.com](http://www.contractingbusiness.com). 


---

## Residential Contractors Forum from page 1

9 a.m. - noon during SMACNA's annual convention in Boca Raton, Fla. The session will be led by John Abbott and Jay Gordon, of the Trane Company Unitary Products Group.

In this 90-minute program, contractors will learn more about application and installation of high efficiency air conditioning systems. Attendees will also participate in an exercise in which they will calculate energy consumption and apply variable-speed HVAC technology solutions to solve high energy usage. They also will learn how to use their knowledge in air filtration, air delivery and humidity control to provide comfort and value to the homeowner. The session will include hands-on demonstrations to clearly show how to solve customer needs.

In addition, the session will focus on the challenges and opportunities that the homeowner faces when making buying decisions pertaining to their home air conditioning system. With more than 60 combined years in the HVAC industry, Mr. Abbott and Mr. Gordon now serve as sales training specialists for the Residential Trane/American Standard Training Program.

The forum will conclude with a roundtable discussion, led by the National Residential Council Steering Committee. Among the issues that will be discussed are using new technology and skilled worker recruitment and retention. 

---

## The Workforce of Tomorrow from page 1

A program offered by the Bay Area Association of SMACNA Chapters in the San Francisco region focuses on offering internships to students to educate them on the benefits of entering the industry.

The program began in 1999 with 12 students placed in internships with SMACNA Contractors. In its second year, the program placed 25 students out of 85 applicants. As a result of the internship experience, two interns joined the apprenticeship training program.

"The purpose of the summer intern program is to create a better understanding among high school and college students of all the different career opportunities available in our industry," comments Audrey Kearns, Bay Area SMACNA summer intern coordinator. "Ultimately, this increased understanding will result in attracting higher numbers of qualified personnel to our member companies."

In 2001, the internship program has attracted 55 SMACNA Contractors and is striving to achieve 100 percent placement of all applicants.

To get started, SMACNA Contractors interested in sponsoring an intern must complete a detailed questionnaire. SMACNA members are asked if they need a shop intern or an office intern, if they need part-time or full-time help and if there are any age requirements for certain jobs.


SMACNA members agree to pay the intern a minimum of \$10 per hour although the contractor may increase the pay scale according to the skills of the intern. Interns completing a degree in engineering or related field have earned more through the program. The intern does not receive other benefits and is not required to join the union for the summer program. Through an agreement with SMWIA Local 104, interns may perform "covered work" under the local agreement. The internship begins in May and is completed in September.

The interns are recruited through local high schools, junior colleges and four-year colleges. SMACNA members attend career fairs and make presentations to attract students to the internship program.

Once a match between applicant and contractor is made, the contractor contacts the student for an interview. If the applicant is hired by the contractor, the student is assigned a mentor from their employing firm.

Interns also attend an orientation program at the local JATC. The orientation program is attended by representatives of Local 104, Bay Area SMACNA leadership and several participating members. Interns receive a tour of the local training facility and receive first aid/CPR training.

The program is supported with several different promotion activities. In addition to attending career fairs, applications and brochures are sent to high school and college guidance counselors. Paycheck stuffers are sent to SMACNA members to recruit potential interns from employees. Contractors interested in hiring an intern are recruited through member mailings.

For more information about the Bay Area Summer Internship Program, contact Audrey Kearns at (510) 635-8212 or [akearns@bayareasmacna.org](mailto:akearns@bayareasmacna.org). 

# Stay Informed with SMACNA's Online Discussion Forums

For many people, the Internet is an essential communication tool in their everyday lives. With access to the Internet, e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms and discussion forums, people separated by hundreds or thousands of miles may converse daily.

For SMACNA residential contractors, the online discussion forum in the Members Only Web site at [www.smacna.org](http://www.smacna.org) offers an ideal opportunity to speak with other SMACNA members. The discussion forum is a convenient way to discuss a variety of business issues. Forum topics include software programs, equipment recommendations and marketing advice, but also may include issues related to recruitment and training.

This is your forum. Check into the online discussion forum and find out what is on the mind of SMACNA residential contractors. Add your comments, offer advice and ask for the comments and advice of other SMACNA Contractors.

To participate in the discussion forums, SMACNA Contractors must be registered for the Members Only Web site. To register, click on the Members Only site on SMACNA's homepage, and then click on register for access. Fill out all required fields on the registration form and click on the register button. You will be notified by e-mail when the validation process is complete. It usually takes no longer than one business day.

If you have questions regarding the discussion forums, contact James Pierzynski, project manager, market sector councils, at (703) 995-4035 or e-mail at [jpierzynski@smacna.org](mailto:jpierzynski@smacna.org). 🏠

---

## New SMACNA Online Software Survey!

# Discover What Software Other SMACNA Members Are Using

Looking for a new service software package? Trying to find estimating software to meet your specific needs?

In order to help SMACNA members in their search for software in these, as well as other areas related to the sheet metal and air conditioning industry, SMACNA has developed a real-time online version of the SMACNA Computer Software Survey, located on the SMACNA Members Only Web site at [www.smacna.org/members](http://www.smacna.org/members). To access the survey, you must be registered for the Members Only site.

The Online Software Survey, which replaces the hard copy version, last published in 1997, offers members a convenient way to stay up-to-date with current software, which constantly changes.

---

See SMACNA Online Software on page 5

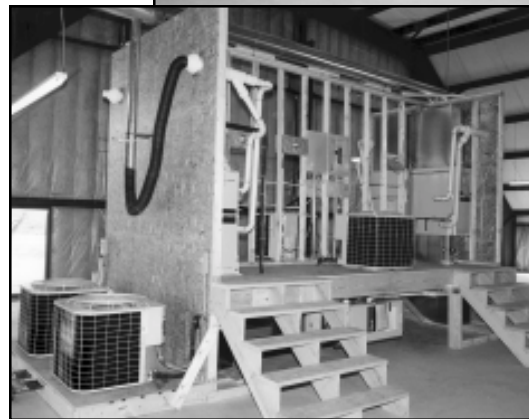
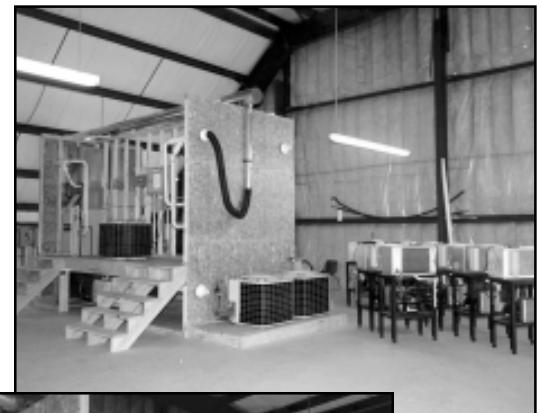
---

## Indianapolis Training Center from page 1

tial heating and cooling system. The simulator is built to replicate a home crawl space. It contains six fully functional Bryant 90+ furnaces and air conditioners. Two furnaces are installed in the updraft position, two in the downdraft position and two in the horizontal position. This is achieved by changing hose connections and relocating the condensate drain.

Students work in groups of two, to tear out one unit completely. This includes all low voltage wiring, thermostats, flues, vents and drains. After the tear out is complete, the instructor inspects the tear out. The group then installs the furnace and air conditioner in a different position using new piping and wiring. This requires the students to make all the necessary changes to the alter the position. When finished, the system must operate properly in both the heating and cooling modes.

In addition, the center is conducting two journeyman upgrade classes in residential/service training. The classes offer 150 hours of additional training for sheet metal workers. The two current sessions are full and there is a waiting list for the next time the classes are offered. "The classes have been very popular and we hope that by providing this training more contractors will branch out into the residential/service field," commented Hardie Smith, training center coordinator. 🏠



The residential simulator is built to replicate a home crawl space.

## Creating a Yellow Page Presence

Even in this information age of e-commerce and Web site presence, the Yellow Pages still remains a central link between consumers and residential HVAC contractors.

According to the Yellow Pages Publishers Association, the air-conditioning contractors/systems heading is the seventh highest revenue generating category in the Yellow Pages with an estimated \$138 million in sales in 1999. Each year an estimated 43 million references are made to this category and 78 percent of readers contacted a contractor they found in the Yellow Pages.

When planning their company's advertising program, many residential SMACNA Contractors use the Yellow Pages. While your ad may not be the only ad in the directory, there are several steps that can bring attention to you and your company over the competition.

When a consumer opens the Yellow Pages, they have already made the decision to buy. The question on their mind is "who do I want to buy from." A Yellow Page ad needs to speak to the needs and wants of the consumer and answer "I can solve your problem, call us."

When creating an ad for the Yellow Pages, there are several elements that will create a high-performance ad. A strong headline that will command attention and engage the reader is essential. Keep a targeted focus, select the market you want to reach and focus your ad to their needs. Include exciting illustrations or photographs, the reader will be drawn to a photo or illustration over text. Make your company stand out from the crowd, focus on how you are different from the competition. Less is more, ad cost is based on space but, do not feel obligated to cover every inch with text. Keeping your ad professional and clutter-free will get results.

An ad in the Yellow Page is the opportunity to speak directly to a potential customer. By creating an ad that speaks to the needs of the consumer, you can generate calls and potential sales for your organization.

For more information on this topic, visit [www.yellowpageswar.com](http://www.yellowpageswar.com) or [www.hudsonink.com](http://www.hudsonink.com). 🏠

## Refocus Your Sales Effort

*(Excerpted from Contractor Cents newsletter by Ruth King)*

Everything that I am reading now shows that the free spending days of the last few years are over. People are starting to get concerned about the economy and not spending money on things that they might have spent it on last year. For us that means potentially fewer replacement sales, service sales, etc.

In many parts of the country fuel bills have doubled or tripled on top of a perceived shaky economy. These are two very strong reasons why you need to change your marketing message.

It's time to become more proactive rather than reactive with respect to selling. If the telephone is not ringing much, then it's time to begin making telephone calls rather than waiting to receive them. It's time to review those tickler files of work that the technicians recommended that wasn't done on the last service call. It's time to refocus your selling efforts.

At this point you need to focus on what your customers and potential customers are thinking about...cutting costs...saving money. Things like the benefits of longer equipment life, peace of mind, and more comfort in a customer's home are not going to win you the sale. Don't get me wrong. These are still important things in the system sale. However, the customer is less likely to care about these things right now.

All of the direct mail pieces that you send to your customers should focus on saving money. During these times postcards work well. No one has to open an envelope. If you print them on bright paper, people will notice them and read your message. Make the message short. Focus on the cost-cutting benefits that the customer will get by sealing his ducts, cleaning his system, etc.

If you send newsletters, include ideas on things they can do to save money on their utility bills in their home or office. Write an article about how high efficiency systems can save them money.

The best benefit that you can give the customer is that he will save money on his utility bills. With the size of the checks that many of us have written in the past few months this headline will definitely get the reader's attention!

The absolute worst thing you can do right now is sit back and wait for the telephone to ring. It's not likely to ring as much as it has in the past. So, you have to be proactive. Make sure that your technicians are writing down everything they see when they visit a customer's home or office. If the customer chooses not to make all of the recommended repairs, put a copy of the service ticket in a tickler file. Then, call in a few weeks to set the appointment to make the remaining recommended repairs.

If you haven't sent out information to customers and prospective customers, now's the time to do it. You have to give your customers and potential customers a reason to call you...they will cut costs and save money by using your products and services. 🏠

*Copyright 2001, Ruth King, All rights reserved.*

## Keeping Your Team Happy

With today's tight labor market, keeping a good team together is essential to remaining successful.

Ahead of compensation, many employees rank a pleasant work environment and personal growth as essential aspects of staying with an employer.

### Training Opportunities

Many employees want the opportunity to receive additional training and education. While local training centers offer excellent residential apprentice and journeymen programs, many regions offer additional journeymen upgrade training. Encouraging employees to enroll and offering the time off to attend classes and financial assistance with class cost is a great way to keep a well-trained workforce content. Through SMACNA's Distance Learning program employees can take classes via the Internet at a workstation in the shop.

---

See Keeping Your Team Happy on page 6

---

## What Will Your Customers Say About You?

A recent issue of the Peoria Star Journal, Peoria, Ill., featured a story of excellent customer service and the SMACNA Contractor's dedication to his customer.

Steve Kroll, of Kroll Heating and Air-Conditioning Co., E. Peoria, Ill., received an emergency call on Christmas Eve about a heating system that had failed overnight. The family was frantic on one of the coldest nights of the year. After offering several solutions to the homeowner over the phone, he drove nearly 30 miles out to their home. By this time it was 2 a.m., after two hours of work, he finally succeeded in getting the system operating until the proper parts could be obtained. He returned home and received another call from the homeowner, the system had failed again. Rather than leave the homeowner in a cold home on Christmas Day, Steve called a parts dealer and brought the necessary part to the homeowner and installed it on Christmas.

The grateful homeowner took the opportunity to thank Steve with a letter to the local newspaper. This is a great example of the power of excellent customer service. "Word of mouth" advertising from a satisfied customer is the most powerful endorsement a company may receive. 📌

## Frequently Asked Question

**Q:** Does SMACNA offer guidance on duct penetrations of garage walls?

**A:** In addition to advocating that local codes be carefully checked and that National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 90B be consulted on protection means and clearance to combustibles, SMACNA's "Residential Comfort System Installation Standards Manual" states the following:

### 2.2.6 Garages

If the owner requests heat in the garage and if it is allowed by local codes, a separate heater is preferable to heat supplied by a central system, because it can be controlled separately. In addition, air should not be returned to a central system from the garage because of the health and safety hazards associated with air that is contaminated by exhaust fumes. If the garage is to be heated from a central system, then outdoor air must be used to replace the air delivered to the garage. This make-up air can be provided by either infiltration or mechanical means. Any ductwork penetrating a garage wall from an adjoining conditioned space must include a fire damper if this is a fire-rated wall. 📌

*Source: "Residential Comfort System Installation Standards Manual," 7<sup>th</sup> edition, 1998. The manual costs \$15 for SMACNA members and \$44 for IFUS contributors. The discounted price for engineering and architectural firms is \$58 and the list price is \$83. To order, visit the SMACNA Store at [www.smacna.org](http://www.smacna.org) or call the SMACNA publications department at (703) 803-2989.*

---

### SMACNA Online Software from page 3

---

This networking tool enables you, as a SMACNA member, to locate and contact other contractors who either use the same software or who use software that you may be interested in.

To access the survey, you must complete the survey. To do this, go to the SMACNA Members Only site and click on the software survey icon on the left side of the screen.

Once you get to the survey, click on "complete software survey" on the upper left-hand side. Completing the survey will enable you to access the query software applications section. You may search this section by selecting a software package for any category, inputting a user's name, city, state or primary work category to find out what they are using. Selecting more than one criterion puts a higher constraint on the result set. If you do not find any matches, consider searching for fewer specified software packages.

If you participated in the 1997 software survey, you will need to update your survey in order to access the data.

If you have any questions on the software survey or how to access SMACNA's Members Only site, contact SMACNA's member services department at (703) 995-4024 or e-mail at [info@smacna.org](mailto:info@smacna.org). 📌

# Meet the Newest Steering Committee Members

Jack Goldkamp, Frank Fischer Inc. – Design Aire  
Bridgeton, Mo.

Equally owned by six brothers, Frank Fischer Inc. – Design Aire is managed by its third generation and is welcoming the fourth generation aboard.

Employing 70 to 80 sheet metal workers as sheet metal mechanics, residential service specialists and residential specialists, Design Aire faces many of the same challenges as other SMACNA Contractors working in the residential market. “We are trying to replace an aging workforce with motivated younger workers that are committed to quality and workmanship,” explained Mr. Goldkamp. “We are working hard to keep our marketshare in the face of growing non-union competition.”

The Design Aire company philosophy encourages all employees to treat every customer with good will and respect. “We encourage our employees to treat customers as they would expect to be treated,” explains Mr. Goldkamp. “It seems to have worked for all these years.”

Joining the family business in 1983, he started as the bookkeeper after leaving a teaching career of 11 years. “I think that my official title is vice-president or comptroller or CFO,” commented Mr. Goldkamp. “Titles are not a big part of our operation, my brothers and I are equally active in all areas of the company.”

Roger Zahn, Welsch Heating and Cooling  
St. Louis, Mo.

Entering the sheet metal industry in 1973, Roger Zahn now serves as general manager/service manager of Welsch Heating and Cooling.

With more than 20 years in the sheet metal industry, he considers his career a blessing. “I am very fortunate because I enjoy my job and the company I work for,” commented Mr. Zahn. “I look forward to going to work every day.”

The challenge he sees ahead for his company is finding top-quality service technicians. In addition, keeping up with the constant advances in HVAC technology are a challenge.

The Welsch company philosophy is based on servicing the customer completely. “Our goal is that every customer is completely happy and satisfied with our performance,” explained Mr. Zahn. “To that end each employee is encouraged to take responsibility of satisfying each customer they serve.” 🏠

## Employee Involvement

When setting goals for the company, survey your employees for suggestions. Studies show that employees that feel included in that process actively work to reach those goals. When goals are achieved, recognize the team. Bringing together employees to celebrate a good job creates an environment in which people want to continue to work.

## Personal Time Off

Many times employees feel that workplace needs restrict them from participating in family events. Offering a flexible policy that allows workers to attend teacher conferences, dance performances or sporting events can build goodwill with employees and their families resulting in a more committed workforce.

## Company Culture

“Company culture” is a buzzword that started in the high tech industry, but it can be applied to traditional businesses also. Does your company try to address the individual needs of employees? In the high tech world, employees that are worried about finding an apartment are offered assistance through a real estate agency. Do your technicians frequently work into evening on an installation and miss family dinners? Maybe a change in the “culture” would allow rotations of those jobs to allow technicians to have more opportunities to be at home.

Many companies are evaluating benefit programs to extend beyond compensation and insurance. To be competitive and retain good employees all industries will have to keep up. 🏠

*Note:* As a reminder, issues involving wages, hours and working conditions are mandatory subjects of bargaining. To avoid grievances or unfair labor practice charges, contractors and SMACNA chapters should confer with the local union on those issues involving bargaining unit employees.

The Residential Report is a biannual newsletter published by SMACNA's National Residential Council Steering Committee. Its goal is to provide a sounding board for SMACNA residential contractors to share their experiences and learn more about the residential business.

Executive Editor: Rosalind P. Raymond  
Writer/Editor: Danielle A. Dobiesz  
Layout/Design: Denise J. Ladd



Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association  
P.O. Box 221230 • Chantilly, VA 20153-1230  
Phone: (703) 803-2980 • FAX: (703) 803-3732

Staff Liaison: James F. Pierzynski

[www.smacna.org](http://www.smacna.org)