

# RESIDENTIAL REPORT

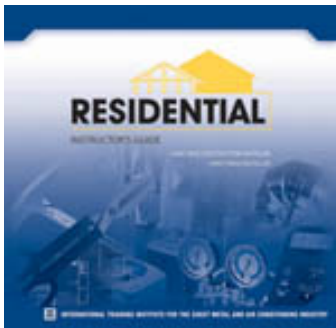
news and views from SMACNA's National Residential Council



Volume 11, Issue Number 1

July 25, 2006

## ITI's New Residential Curriculum Will Produce True Residential Installers Swiftly



"We tell them exactly what they need to know and do it in a way that makes learning easier and more effective," is how James Shoulder, administrator of training for the International Training Institute, described the new residential curriculum presented at the July ITI Board of Trustees meeting. "Not a lot of fluff," he said.

The new training curriculum uses video training support patterned after the very popular and engaging This Old House television show.

"It's as real life as possible and built with the mindset of gaining market share," says SMACNA contractor Jeff Laski, who serves on the ITI Residential Curriculum Task Force. "Our JATCs have been asking for a true residential program and this four-part, 300-hour course fills the bill. It teaches the techniques swiftly, covers all of the disciplines and is win-win for everyone."

The residential course is designed to turn out a competent HVAC Service Technician in approximately a year a half. The course itself should be available to JATCs in April of 2007. Upon completion of this program, technicians may further their education by working through the ITI's core curriculum.

Part one of the program is the Residential HVAC New Construction Installer segment and teaches new construction ductwork installation or "rough-in" work. Trainees learn how to properly set the HVAC equipment.

In part two the student learns to become a Residential HVAC Finish Installer. This person is capable of performing furnace/air conditioning installations, turning the units on, putting in grills and registers, as well as accessories such as air cleaners, humidifiers, special thermostats, etc.

Part three turns out a Residential Retrofit Technician skilled in dealing directly with the customer and working with existing conditions in a home. In addition to having communication/people skills, this person installs replacement equipment and can add an air return vent and cut into hardwood and tile, as well.

Finally, in phase four the student achieves Residential HVAC Service Technician status. At this level not only does the technician have the people skills acquired in phase three, but also they have diagnostic skills, can do some wiring, and sales.

The goal of the new curriculum is to have competent, independent technicians working out in the field as part of the team, as quickly and efficiently as possible.

For more information on the new residential educational program, contact James Shoulders, at (703) 739-7200.

## **SMACNA Technical Inquiries –Flex Duct Tops The List**

One of the daily responsibilities of SMACNA’s technical staff is to respond to technical inquiries. One of the most common residential inquiries is on flexible duct issues.

Flexible duct inquiries often come from code officials regarding what they believe is the overuse of flexible duct. Many are surprised to learn that there are no limitations on its use.

In the “Residential Comfort System Installation Standards Manual,” SMACNA recommends the minimum length for flex duct and outlines a standard for hanging systems.

Research has demonstrated that all-flex “duct” systems present very high resistance to airflow and is often the culprit of airflow conditions that are too low for what HVAC manufacturers recommend for their equipment to operate at its rated capacity and efficiency.

SMACNA as an American National Standard Institute (ANSI) Standards Developing Organization (SDO) provides interpretations of SMACNA standards to the general public.

## **Need Residential Advice?**

More than 30 residential contractors have signed up for SMACNA’s Residential E-mail Listserv. Have a question on manufacturing warranties, contracts or training? Sign up for the listserv and get your questions answered promptly.

By joining this e-mail list, you’ll have a host of residential contractors on hand to network with and give you their advice and insight.

Subscribing to the list is easy. SMACNA members can either call Jeannette Schluderberg at (703) 803-2991 or send her an e-mail at [jschluderberg@smacna.org](mailto:jschluderberg@smacna.org).

Your short message can be as simple as “please subscribe me to the Residential E–mail Listserv.” Once you’ve been added to the list, you’ll receive a confirmation from SMACNA and you’ll be able to converse with the group members.

## **Succeeding In The Residential HVAC Market**

In the residential HVAC market one unquestionable fact is that the opportunity is out there for commercial contractors who expand into residential HVAC, and who do it right.

Since residential HVAC is very consumer–driven it requires the business owner to think more like a retailer, and define the value proposition. The value proposition is the primary benefit of the product or service, rather than the product itself.

“The residential HVAC business is a customer intensive business, and you have to have a mindset devoted to that,” says Dave Milano, president of AAERO Heating & Sheet Metal, of Novato, Calif., and Chairman of SMACNA’s National Residential Steering Committee.

Mr. Milano agrees that residential HVAC requires a retail sales mentality, and adds that the sales technicians you choose should have a knack for helping homeowners feel at ease, providing sound advice, and negotiating.

“You have to develop that retail mentality, and cultivate it in the people who will be handling the residential division, because you’re dealing with people’s homes, and they’re afraid of making a mistake,” says Mr. Milano.

“They want the company they buy from to have credibility, they want to develop a relationship based on trust, and they want to make sure someone will be there to help them out after the sale.”

Another key to success is promoting from within. Russ Kimball, owner of Evergreen State Heat & AC, of Everett, Wash., says that when it comes to hiring it is often risky to get a person from outside the company to manage others or perform new tasks. He first and foremost tries to promote from within for most positions, and also cross–trains to expand team capabilities. “I hate to depend on extra variables of hiring unknowns, which increases risk exponentially,” says Mr. Kimball.

Other key area is having local product support. Mr. Kimball suggests that contractors considering the residential side of the business speak to Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEMs) before picking a product line. When selecting a brand, support from the local wholesaler, is necessary.

John Illten, president of Illten’s, Inc., Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and SMACNA vice president, suggests that it is important to “get a look at various pricing and advertising support,” and all other ways an OEM/wholesaler arrangement can best benefit the business. He also suggests talking to local peers who are active in residential HVAC to learn their views on the regional market.

## **Three Essential Components For A Profitable Residential Retrofit And Service Business**

SMACNA residential contractors will come together in Phoenix for a residential forum comprised of educational sessions, industry updates, roundtable discussions and networking opportunities.

The educational session will focus on three essential components to establishing and maintaining a successful residential retrofit and service business. These include an expert service manager, customer-oriented service technicians, and a measurable advertising and marketing program.

John Garofalo, a partner with Callahan/Roach and Garofalo, will use his wealth of experience in these areas to show SMACNA contractors how they can be successful, resulting in a profitable residential retrofit and service business.

Mr. Garofalo will help attendees see the need for having a service manager who effectively oversees every aspect of the service department and motivates employees to work toward achieving department goals. He will also stress the need for training technicians to be customer fixers, as opposed to box fixers. This includes being the customer's buying assistant, as well as portraying a professional appearance. Mr. Garofalo will also emphasize the importance of tracking the success of marketing campaigns to prevent making the same mistakes over and over.

This session will be followed by an update on a number of current initiatives by The International Training Institute (ITI) related to training residential installers and service technicians. The forum will conclude with a roundtable discussion led by members of the Residential Contractors Steering Committee. The panel will discuss critical issues facing SMACNA residential contractors.

For more information on the annual convention, Oct. 8 to 12, contact Mary Lou Taylor, director of meetings and convention at (703) 803-2998 or [mtaylor@smacna.org](mailto:mtaylor@smacna.org), or visit the SMACNA homepage at [www.smacna.org](http://www.smacna.org).

## **Iowa Residential Service Market Recovery Efforts**

The Sheet Metal Contractors of Iowa and Local Union 45 jointly participated in a recent session on Residential Service Market Recovery.

Held at the local training center in Des Moines, Iowa, the main focus of the program was to provide attendees with the tools to be successful in the residential service and replacement market. The panel was led by former SMACNA President Butch Welsch, of Welsch Heating and Cooling Company, St. Louis, Mo., who discussed using service agreements, effectively scheduling service calls, pricing service work to be profitable, setting prices for parts and replacement units and choosing the right manufacturer to team up with.

Mr. Welsch told the attendees, not to become discouraged as it may take some time to develop a substantial business. "Be patient," he said. "The results will be worthwhile," he said.

SMWIA General Secretary/Treasurer Joe Nigro told the group that the union was committed to regaining this part of the business. Citing the residential agreements brokered in Florida and Michigan, Mr. Nigro added that the SMWIA is open to any new ideas on wage packages.

He concluded that the International Training Institute (ITI) stands ready with qualified instructors to provide the necessary residential training. Members interested in obtaining more information about the program may contact Jason Watson, assistant director, labor relations at (703) 803-2981 or by e-mail at [jwatson@smacna.org](mailto:jwatson@smacna.org).

## Single Family Homes Decline; Condos Boom

According to McGraw–Hill Construction, residential building continued to gradually settle back from its record pace of the past year.

In May, the level for multifamily housing was 18 percent above the average monthly amount for this structure type in 2005, in contrast to the decline reported for single family housing. May included the start of six multifamily projects valued each in excess of \$100 million.

“While there’s emerging concern about overbuilding in such markets as Miami and Las Vegas, multifamily housing is seeing additional strength in construction this year, as the condo boom for the U.S. as whole continues,” stated Robert A. Murray, vice president of economic affairs for McGraw–Hill Construction.

## Meet The Newest Residential Council Member Mark Ellis Sr. –Sheet Metal A Family Affair



Mark Ellis Sr.

SMACNA’s National Residential Council Steering Committee welcomes a new member, Mark Ellis Sr.

Mark is the president of Air Moving Equipment Company, of Las Cruces, N.M., which has been in business for 12 years. Air Moving Equipment is family owned and operated and provides residential and commercial air conditioning and heating systems.

For Mark Ellis Sr., working as a sheet metal contractor is a family affair. Mark’s father worked for 50 years as a sheet metal worker after starting his career in 1946. In 1972, Mark became an apprentice and now his oldest and youngest sons as well as his wife are also working together in the business.

As the president, Mark feels that the greatest challenge he faces in today’s business climate is to be willing to adapt and conform to the many changing obstacles that exist in today’s marketplace.

Air Moving Equipment Company’s mission as a company is to enjoy a sense of teamwork in the workplace, where safety, continuing education, and a place to learn, grow and prosper exist within the company. As a heating, ventilation and air conditioning contractor they are pleased to offer their expertise, services and quality products at a reasonable cost to everyone.

---

Editor: Rosalind P. Raymond [r-raymond@smacna.org](mailto:r-raymond@smacna.org) | Asst. Editor/Writer: Sarah Moore [smoore@smacna.org](mailto:smoore@smacna.org)

Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association  
4201 Lafayette Center Drive Chantilly, Virginia 20151-1209  
Tel (703) 803-2980 Fax (703) 803-3732 [info@smacna.org](mailto:info@smacna.org)



Copyright © 2006 SMACNA. All rights reserved.  
Created by [Matrix Group International](#)