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ONLINE EXTRA

Codes & Business: What Have You Done?

Contributed by Allen Inlow, senior director of codes and standards, IAPMO

What have you done? A multifaceted question if there ever was one. The feelings resulting from hearing this question can vary greatly depending upon whether it is asked with an angry tone of voice and a frown, a surprised tone and a smile or even a puzzled look from someone simply seeking information. It can even be a challenge if the questioner is asking about your accomplishments in a specific area. What does this have to do with being a successful mechanical contractor?

Only a few short years ago, MCAA began to help member contractors to position themselves as leaders in the growing "green" movement worldwide, carrying the plumbing and mechanical industries along with it. That stance may pay you a dividend very soon.

Around the same time, and with encouragement from both the UA and MCAA, IAPMO identified the need and began work on green supplemental provisions that a jurisdiction can adopt to create a higher standard for energy efficiency and pollution reductions. Interestingly, these supplemental provisions are being formatted to fit the Uniform Plumbing and Mechanical Codes, and also to fit and coexist with any plumbing or mechanical code adopted by a jurisdiction, including state-authored codes. The supplemental provisions are on schedule to be released in February 2010. Recently, the ICC announced that they would be developing green provisions for their codes as well.

What have you done? MCAA contractors have participated in the IAPMO committees that are creating these provisions and can take a lot of credit for their existence, and the philosophy that created them. This is quite an accomplishment in a short period of time and one to be proud of. When they are adopted, the green provisions will certainly pay you dividends for having foresight and being ready. "But wait, there's more!" as many TV announcers insist on late-night infomercials. Current events may result in multiple dividends for you, just like the stock splits that used to occur.

Your green energy conservation efforts could be turned into requirements by law, which certainly will be included in the plumbing and mechanical codes, with the U.S. Department of Energy setting goals and objectives that have to be met. Some provisions currently favored by the Department of Energy include:

- A requirement that the Secretary of the Department of Energy set "targets" for construction codes to meet each three years;
- The establishment of 2006 as the baseline year for energy usage, with 2030 set as the year to achieve net-zero energy efficiency for all new buildings when technologically feasible and life-cycle cost effective;
- An overall 30 percent reduction in energy established as the target immediately after the bill is enacted;
- A mandated 50 percent reduction in energy as the target on or after January 1, 2016;
- Measures in place to achieve the targets in building and construction codes, including plumbing and mechanical codes, and state or local adoption and enforcement of those measures; and
- State and local jurisdiction funding that is tied to the achievement of these targets.

Can anyone meet these targets? Thus far, not one entity involved in commercial, industrial or residential construction has claimed they could. Many admit they have never considered computing it in any similar manner. Possibly no one truly knows. But I assure you that many environmental groups already believe you can do it! While many others continue to fight the environmentalists, the plumbing and mechanical industry in general and MCAA in particular has embraced their concepts and educated them.

What have you done? MCAA has established a policy of pushing for efficiency as good business.

What have you done? MCAA participates in the creation of higher green standards in the codes and in their projects, and for adoption of those standards in the jurisdictions where you work.

What have you done? You have prepared yourselves for the future. No one in the mechanical or plumbing industry is more prepared to take advantage of the green opportunities than the members of MCAA and their partners at the UA.

The only major concern is that the environmental community and the federal legislators and regulators who support them will get too far out front and set a requirement like the water conserving fixtures of a few years ago that did not work. But if there is a mechanism to truly and fairly adjust the targets to technically feasible and life-cycle cost-effective numbers, this could be a huge advantage for you and the project owners you work for, and even a sales tool for use with the owners you want to work for.

What have you done? A lot, and you need to tell everyone who will listen all about it. You are creating the future and a better world all at the same time!

If you have questions about *Codes & Business*, please contact [Allen Inlow](#).