

New Backflow School - A First for the Veteran's Administration

by Debbie Brammer

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When Scott Webb took the job as Maintenance and Operations General Foreman last year, one of the goals put before him was to improve training and opportunities for his department. “Professional training, whether it is for the physicians, nurses, or tradesmen in the M&O shops, is vital if we are going to maintain a safe, sanitary environment for our patients,” said Scott.

Scott, a licensed master plumber, is certified in plumbing engineering and design with the American Society of Plumbing Engineers. He is also a certified backflow assembly tester with the American Society of Sanitary Engineering (ASSE) and a backflow and cross-connection instructor in testing, repair and survey. In simple terms, backflow is the reversal of water flow in the water piping system that can be caused by a drop in the water pressure to a point of a siphon effect. Steam boilers, pumps and hot water boilers are examples of equipment that can produce backpressure. A cross connection is a physical connection of the potable (drinking) water supply with a contaminated or polluted system thereby providing a path for contamination of the potable water. In a hospital setting the equipment could include boilers, x-ray developers, sterilizers, fire sprinkler piping systems, and hot water heating systems.

Last fall, Scott began exploring the feasibility of establishing a backflow cross-connection testers school at this medical center. Such a school is unheard of in the VA, but leaning upon his vast work experience and his faith in God, Scott pursued the idea with the local plumbing union and the ASSE. Their positive support spurred him on. In April Scott completed the set up of

a “hands-on” backflow cross-connection testing facility at the medical center.

The testing facility was originally intended to train the qualified employees at the hospital. This in itself was a first in the VA. There was even the thought that the school might eventually be used to train VA employees from other sites. Then in April, the program was bumped to another level when the Plumbers and Pipefitters Local Union 521 was granted use of the testing facility to help prepare four of their members (including Tom Daniels in our M&O Shop) to take the ASSE test. Scott proctored the test, and all four individuals passed and became certified ASSE testers. This happened in the same month that the medical center received a commendation from the EPA Region 3, WV Health Department for our backflow cross-connection program.

July 3, Scott received word from ASSE that the school had been approved. Tom Daniels will be the proctor, with the first class anticipated in late August. “I commend Scott and Tom for their time and efforts in making this a first for the VA,” says Chris Albright, Assistant Chief, Facility & Plant Management Service. “Also several M&O staff have assisted in this endeavor and are to be commended for their efforts.”

Scott is quick to point out that the whole process has been a joint effort. “Without the support of so many - Mr. Pennington, Ron Stertzbach, Chris Albright, members of the M&O staff, and Tim Rucker and Jimmy Chinn with Local 521, the school would not have been possible,” said Scott.

“We live in the age of certifications,” said Scott, “and we in the VA need to lead the way as we have done in so many areas. All VA professionals must stay abreast of the latest in technology and training if we are going to continue setting national standards. Our choices will determine our future.”



ASSE would like to congratulate Scott Webb for his being included in the 2002/2003 America's Registry of Outstanding Professionals. Acceptance is granted to individuals who have demonstrated leadership and dedication in their profession or industry.

If you would like to learn more about our Professional Certification Program visit our website at www.asse-plumbing.org or contact Marianne at the International Office 440-835-3040. ●