Region Director Elections

Two new directors, two returners and two candidates

The 2021 “odd-numbered” ABPA region director elections have delivered a little bit of everything this spring. One region (9, eastern Canada) had no nominees and will remain “directorless.” One other region (7, Pacific Northwest) is the only one with two nominees. Ballots went out last week to ABPA members in AK, ID, MT, OR and WA, to elect incumbent Allen Wilder or challenger Barb Coffman.

The other four regions each had only one qualified director nominee. Region 1 (CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, RI and VT) and Region 3 (AL, FL, GA, MS, NC, SC and TN) have their incumbent directors coming back, Michael Hebert and Kathy Riley, respectively. Meantime, Region 5 (CO, NM, UT and WY) will soon be under new director Pete Keers, while the newcomer in Region 11 (IL, IN, KY, MI and OH) will be Jeff Vlisides.

Here is a paraphrasing of some of the information each of these ABPA members provided in their election information:

Region 1 - Michael Hebert (Returning)

‘I have been a board member for the Rhode Island Backflow Association for the past 12 years and am a former president and past president of the organization. My goals and focus are aligned with ABPA. Enhancing staff performance and resourcefulness are some of my key strengths. I get along well with others and thrive on problem-solving.’

Region 3 - Kathy Riley (Returning)

‘I am the ABPA Awards Committee chair and a member of the association’s Conference Committee. I have served as president and vice president of the ABPA Carolinas Chapter. And I am a 26-year member of the Charlotte Water backflow group. I believe educating the public on backflow and the importance of our water supply is more vital than ever!’

Region 5 - Pete Keers (New, succeeding Jesse Bockhouse)

‘I have worked in the drinking water industry for more than 35 years, starting as a water operator, moving to a district manager and now as a state regulator. I have worked with cross connection control programs at all levels. I want to increase and maintain local participation of backflow assembly testers, program administrators/specialists and plumbing professionals.’
Board of Directors

Continued…

Troy Baird
Region 4 Director (AR, LA, OK, TX)

Jesse Bockhouse
Region 5 Director (CO, NM, UT, WY)

Lyle Greenhill
Region 6 Director (AZ, CA, HI, NV)

Allen Wilder
Region 7 Director (AK, ID, MT, OR, WA)

Open at this time
Region 8 Director (AB, BC, MB, NT, NU, SK, YT Canada)

Region 9 Director (ON, PEI, PQ, NB, NL, NS Canada)

Region 10 Director (MN, ND, SD, WI)

Danny Jurkowitz
Region 11 Director (IL, IN, KY, MI, OH)

Rich Koenig
Region 12 Director (IA, KS, MO, NE)

Mike Lueck
Director-at-Large

Useful ABPA Resources
ABPA Membership Brochure
Online Dues Renewal Instructions
Certification Program Resources

View the ABPA Community Calendar featuring upcoming Certification exam information and other local chapter events.

Contact Us
ABPA National Office
6672 South 1570 West
West Jordan, UT 84084
(801) 436-7238
http://www.abpa.org

Region 7 Candidate – Barb Coffman (Challenger)

‘I oversaw education related to backflow prevention assembly testing and repairs – and cross connection control surveys – for Montana State University’s environmental training center, until recently retiring. I have been a member of ABPA since 1997 and received the association’s Gold Eagle Award in 2018. I am a relentless supporter of those who work in all aspects of the water industry.’

Region 7 Candidate – Allen Wilder (Incumbent)

‘The ABPA organization is and has been facing financial challenges for the past few years and I believe I have the skills to help with that problem. The Board of Directors should be more hands on in decision making to ensure all committee functions are carried out properly. I would like to attempt to make changes for the betterment of the association.’

Region 9 – Vacant

Region 11 - Jeff Vlisides (New, succeeding Danny Jurkowitz)

‘I have been an ABPA member since 1988 and owner of Backflow Prevention Services, Inc. since 1990. I became ABPA Michigan Chapter President in 2010. I would like to see this industry become more unified. I am certified to test in seven states and two countries. Since 2017, I have owned the Michigan Backflow Institute, while also serving as a certified ASSE instructor and proctor.’

A Message from ABPA Vice President Blake Anderson

Starting irrigation season effectively requires lots of careful attention to details

Temperatures are rising and Spring is upon us. Soon the irrigation season will break into full swing. As water providers, it’s time to send our letters notifying customers to prepare their irrigation systems for water to come back. Here are a few tips to help make that contact as efficient and effective as possible.

Reminder letters should include:
1. Dates water can be used for irrigation purposes (for example: April 15-October 15)

2. Times water can be used, to maximize conservation (for example: 6:00 pm to 10:00 am)
3. Water saving recommendations, such as:
   • Water two or three times per week, for 20 to 30 minutes per sprinkler zone.
   • Repair irrigation system water leaks in a timely manner to reduce waste.
   • Use mulch in flower beds and mulch lawn clippings back into your grass.

You should also consider offering water saving classes.

Remind your customers, their backflow assemblies need to be inspected and tested by a certified technician, annually. Remind them of their test due date. Test results need to be sent to you, the water purveyor.

**Items to complete before turning water back on:**
1. Make sure the irrigation control clock is in the “off” position.

2. Locate the backflow prevention assembly, turn off all test cock valves, turn off the #1 shut off (upstream) valve and the #2 shut off (downstream) valve. Both valves should start in the closed position.

3. Make sure all other valves in the irrigation system are in the closed position. This includes electronic sprinkler valves. The solenoids should be turned off, hand tight.

4. Locate the main irrigation water supply line shut off valve and verify it is in the “off” position. Inspect the valve to ensure it is in good operating condition.

At this point, you have completed a visual inspection of your irrigation system. All downstream valves are verified to be off. The irrigation controller clock is turned off. You are now ready to turn the water into your irrigation system.

**Items to complete as water is turned back on:**
1. Turn the main irrigation supply valve on very slowly. You should hear water running for a few seconds, as it fills the line. Then it should stop. If the water doesn't stop, a downstream valve may have been left open. Find the valve and turn it off. If water is still running, check for leaks and make necessary repairs. When the main irrigation line is charged, up to the backflow preventer, move to the next step.

2. Slowly open the #1 shut off valve (upstream) of the backflow assembly to pressurize it. Next, slowly open the #2 shut off valve (downstream) of the assembly and leave it open at a 45° angle. This will slowly charge the main irrigation line. It will take a few minutes to charge, before you hear the water stop running. While filling the line, look for signs of water leaks such as spraying or puddles of water on the ground. If you find leaks, shut off the valve and make repairs. Recharge the line by turning on the #2 shut off valve and leave it on at a 45° angle. Once the main line is charged – and water has stopped running – open the #2 shut off valve all the way.

3. If water did not stop running (in the previous step) and yet there were no water leaks between the sprinkler valve box and the backflow assembly, check for leaks in the sprinkler valve box. If there is a leak in the valve box, make repairs. If a zone of sprinklers is on, check the irrigation clock to make sure it is in the “off” position. If sprinklers are on for one zone, check the valve on that zone and make sure the bleed screw is down tight. If the zone is still on, close the #2 shut
off valve. Take the sprinkler valve apart (the zone it was stuck on), clean debris or replace the diaphragm so it can seat properly. Reassemble the valve and recharge the system.

4. Now that your system is charged and all valves are working, manually turn each zone on at the irrigation clock, one at a time. Check for leaks in each zone. Make repairs as needed. Adjust sprinkler heads so streets or cars are not being sprayed.

5. After making all necessary repairs, and a final inspection, it’s time to program your sprinkler (clock) irrigation controller.

As the water purveyor, it’s important to provide thorough and accurate information to your customers. You may need to provide a couple of classes or written information on backflow and irrigation, each season, to educate them.

I hope this is helpful. Happy irrigation season!
For story ideas, it would be very helpful if you include contact information for one or two individuals who can contribute to an article or would be available for an interview.

Here’s hoping your friends and family are safe, healthy and excited about that light at the end of the tunnel.

Won’t that first newsletter that does NOT mention viruses, quarantines and event cancellations be refreshing?! It likely won’t be the next one (July 1) – but it’s coming.

Headquarters Update

Beginning the new normal - or at least we hope so!

By Patti Fauver, Executive Director

I hope as I write this update for the July newsletter, I no longer have to hedge on where this pandemic might be and we can start planning events, meetings, trainings, exams... just life in general, without the threat of a next infection wave and more restrictions. Stay the course everyone, so we can put this time behind us!

I’m not sure we’ll ever have “normal” seasons again. The deep freeze in Texas and record warmth in the north seem to be proving that. As with this pandemic, I think being flexible and rolling with the current conditions or restrictions is the name of the game.

2021 ABPA Virtual Education Conference

Register now – if you haven’t already – for the ABPA’s first virtual conference. Check out the conference information below or on the website (abpa.org). Presentation topics span the breadth of the cross connection control and backflow prevention industry. There’s something for all of us. Again, your conference dates are Monday through Wednesday, April 19-21.

Board of Directors Meeting and Annual Member Meeting

ABPA bylaws require a yearly membership meeting to be held during the annual conference. Because our 2021 conference is virtual, your member meeting will be combined with the Board meeting on Saturday April 17, at 11:00 AM EDT.

This will also be virtual. Meeting information and agenda will be emailed to members soon, or you can register here anytime.

Elections

As you read in our lead article, ABPA will conduct one election this year, for Region 7 director. Ballots have been mailed to Region 7 members (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington). In the meantime, a hearty welcome to our new and returning directors: Mike Hebert, Kathy Riley, Pete Keers and Jeff Vlisides.

Also, a heartfelt thank you for your service to outgoing ABPA region directors Jesse Bockhouse and Danny Jurkowitz. We will miss you on the board but hope to work with and see you at other ABPA activities and future meetings.

Certifications

With all the pandemic challenges and restrictions, ABPA’s temporary COVID-19 recertification bridge has helped more than 110 individuals maintain their certification, when health restrictions – or lack of exam availability – would have prevented it. ABPA will continue to offer these two options to recertify, as restated below.
ABPA will continue to hold tester and specialist exams wherever possible. We strongly encourage all individuals who need to recertify to sign up for these available, traditional recertification exams. Tester and specialist exams can be found [here].

**Option 1: Standard ABPA Recertification** - Requires successful completion of a 100-question written exam and a performance exam covering field test procedures on all four (4) assemblies (RP, DC, PVB, SVB). **Successful completion of this exam process grants the standard three (3) year recertification.**

**Option 2: Temporary COVID-19 ABPA Recertification** – Requires each individual to participate in a scheduled ABPA webinar, presenting the field test procedures for the four (4) assemblies (RP, DC, PVB, SVB). Group viewing will **not** be allowed. These webinars will be monitored to assure continual attendance.

During the webinar, attendees will be required to answer all field test procedure and diagnostic questions to qualify for the Temporary ABPA Recertification. **This temporary COVID-19 ABPA Recertification will extend your certified status for twelve (12) months from the date of the original or extended expiration date.** For more details on this alternative, visit our homepage [abpa.org].

**ABPA Scholarship essay deadline extended to April 30**
The deadline for the ABPA Harrington-Arthur Memorial Essay Competition has been extended to April 30. If you are aware of high school age students who could use some financial aid for their college plans, please encourage them to check out this opportunity [here].

**National Drinking Water Week – May 2-8**
The drinking water industry recognizes the first week in May as National Drinking Water Week. This recognition was started by the American Water Works Association more than 40 years ago, to highlight the vital need for reliable access to clean, safe water. I think all our members can raise a glass (of tap water, of course) to that!! If you are looking for water fair information, check out our selection of Buster Backflow comics and other educational information at your ABPA online store.

**Helpful links – in case you missed them**

**Water Quality**
Click [here] for strategies on for preventing and managing harmful cyanobacterial blooms (HCBs).

**Irrigation**
Click [here] to see the final sensor-based controller specifications issued in February by EPA.

**Drinking Water Regulations**
Click [here] to review the latest proposed *National Primary Drinking Water regulation changes on the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions; Delay of Effective and Compliance Dates*. Comments are due by April 12.

**Code Development**
Click [here] to see International Code Council applications for its IECC development committees. Click [here] to see the 2024 UPC and UMC development schedule.

As we hopefully enter the home stretch of this pandemic marathon, please keep yourself and your loved ones safe – air five!
Registration is now underway for our first-ever Virtual Education Conference to be held April 19-21.

Due to reduced costs for this on-line event, ABPA can offer member registration for just $100 and non-member registration for $200. Click here to join us.

The 12 technical sessions – to be presented over three days – will cover multiple cross connection control industry issues, including:

- The state of ABPA, with an update from your national headquarters
- Proper care of field test kits
- Isolation and containment protection: What's correct for your facility or jurisdiction?
- Understanding liability and insurance protection for your small business
- California wildfires and their effect on potable water systems
- Lessons learned from the Charlotte Airport backflow incident
- Un-grandfathering 10,000 commercial customers
- Military base inspections: Is there a need?
- Tester and specialist certification: the ABPA program
- Water loss associated with inspection and testing of fire sprinkler systems
- Backflow prevention assembly repair strategies
- Backflow prevention in 2040

For more conference information, including your agenda and program, click here.

For information on sponsoring a portion of the 2021 ABPA Education Conference, click here.

Past ABPA Meritorious Service Award Winner Profile
Texas father & son have been keeping Lone Star State drinking water safe for nearly half a century


No, Fred and Troy Baird aren't that famous – or that rich. But this Texas father and son have been working for decades to help keep drinking water safe in their home state. In this newsletter, we profile both of them, as a past ABPA Meritorious Service Award winner (Fred, 2006) and a current ABPA Board Member (Troy, Region 4 Director, 2016 to present).
Sixty years ago this spring (1961), Fred graduated from San Antonio’s Sam Houston High, one year ahead of his school sweetheart – and now wife of 57 years – Sandra. Having not yet found his calling in water, Fred was instead making an early career in grocery produce.

“The first time I lived outside Texas came in November 1963, when the produce wholesaler I worked for sent me to live and work in California,” Fred said. “Sandra and I lived in Oxnard (northwest of Los Angeles) for three months. That was our honeymoon.”

Baird remembers the cross-country drive being a somber one, as he and Sandra listened to radio coverage of the John F. Kennedy assassination, just two days after the 35th President’s death in their home state.

Baird spent that winter, and the following one, studying and evaluating produce in California, while also playing at the beach and even learning a bit about snow skiing.

“We didn’t really ‘take up’ skiing; we never had a lesson,” Fred explained. “One time we rode the lift all the way to the top (at Big Bear Mountain Resort) because we wanted to eat at the restaurant up there. We had no intention of trying to ski down. We faked an injury so we could ride the lift back down. We had fun, although we couldn’t even ski the bunny hill without wiping out.”

After deciding tomatoes, lettuce and strawberries weren’t his long-term calling, Fred Baird took a job with San Antonio Water, as a credit collector. He says that was a harrowing way to begin his water career. It was his job to go into often “rough” neighborhoods, to collect water bill payments or manually shut off water service.

“Things sometimes turned violent, although I was never actually hurt on the job,” Baird said. “I had lots of things thrown at my car. One time I peeled out to get away from an angry crowd – my tires throwing loose gravel on them – only to get down the road a ways, and discover it was a dead end. Passing back through that crowd to leave was no fun.”

Baird would often show up to a home with a delinquent water bill in the morning and promise not to turn the water off until the end of the day, giving frustrated but grateful residents time to fill jugs, bowls and bathtubs with water.

After eight years working collections – and just a few months before Richard Nixon became our only President to resign – Fred was also ready to make a change.

“Cutting people’s water off was not a career,” he said. “That was during the time of race riots. We sometimes had to have police escorts just to do our job. But I lucked out. In March 1974, the city water board decided to form a backflow prevention section. When they named me a ‘cross connection inspector,’ I had no idea what I was doing. But I was excited to make the change.”

That move began Fred’s career teaching tester training classes – the first such classes ever offered in Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma or New Mexico.

“No one knew what water backflow was back then; but we had received a number of cross connection complaints,” Fred explained. “That’s why the cross connection control section was created. I

“It was great when ABPA formed. It was an opportunity for our little association to tie into something national.”
worked in that section from 1974 until my retirement in 1999. I retired from the San Antonio Water System (SAWS) after 33½ years on the job.”

During his quarter-century in the backflow prevention section, Baird’s title changed only once: from “cross connection inspector” to “CHIEF cross connection inspector.”

“Since we were starting from scratch, I developed and enforced our backflow prevention program,” he said. “It was challenging – but I always enjoyed it. We started a backflow prevention association, with monthly meetings, back in 1979 – before there was an ABPA.”

Back in those early days, Baird travelled the entire state of Texas, offering tester classes to just a handful of people. He was excited when the American Backflow Prevention Association came along in the mid-1980s.

“I once drove to Amarillo (508 miles) and spent a week, to train five guys,” Fred continued. “It was great when ABPA formed. It was an opportunity for our little association to tie into something national. By then we had about 35 members. Mostly we joined because they were conducting training conferences.”

As retirement began to creep up on him, Fred launched his own backflow and cross connection tester training business, Bac-Flo Unlimited, in 1995. Actually, he’s quick to explain, Sandra did it.

“There are advantages to having a female-owned business, so my wife is the president of Bac-Flo Unlimited,” he explained. “But that’s not just a title. Sandra is a major player in the company. She takes all our calls and schedules everything. We’ve had trainees come in from as far away as Montana and Guam. Before COVID, we offered at least two classes a month, usually with 25 to 30 people. This is basically a fulltime job for her.”

Because SAWS had firm travel restrictions, Fred never pursued the ABPA presidency. But he was ABPA Region 4 Director (AR, LA, OK, TX, the post son Troy now holds) from 1988 to 1992. The organization also gave him what he calls the “highlight of my career,” several years later.

“It was very humbling to win the (2006 ABPA) Meritorious Service Award,” Baird said. “ABPA is the organization in the backflow world. I was at the conference in Phoenix when they began flashing my baby pictures as they started the announcement. It was a complete surprise. Sandra and Troy were there. Gee whiz, it was the ultimate.”

Fred is also very grateful to another ABPA Meritorious Service Award winner. His SAWS co-worker Bruce Rathburn won the award in 2012.

“Bruce was my right-hand man for about 12 years before I retired,” Baird said. “He took my place as chief cross connection inspector.”

Coronavirus has put a dent in the number of students Fred and Troy now train. But they are still keeping busy with Bac-Flo Unlimited – something Troy is expecting of Dad, for years to come.

“Troy says I have to do this until age 90, which is still 13 years from now,” the senior Baird said. But what else would I be doing? You can’t fish all the time. I have made a lot of true friends (through
teaching backflow tester courses). Some of those friends go all the way back to when I started, in 1974.”

When they do break away, Fred and Sandra like to visit their condo and boat on the Gulf of Mexico, in Rockport, Texas (160 miles southeast of home). Shelley, their miniature schnauzer, normally tags along also.

“My wife and I were both born and raised in the San Antonio area, and still love it here,” Baird concluded. “We’re happy.”

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**Board Member Profile**

**Troy Baird ‘accidentally’ followed in Dad’s safe drinking water footsteps**

Troy Baird – and Dad, Fred – have been equal partners in Bac-Flo Unlimited for a generation now. But, for the first 20 years of his life, Troy had no idea he’d be joining the family business.

“Mom is the majority owner of Bac-Flo Unlimited, at 51%, while Dad and I are equal partners, each owning 24.5% of the company,” Baird explained. “But I just kind of happened into the business.”

Troy was born in November 1970, five years after his only sibling, older sister Kim. He came along during Fred’s 8-year stint collecting delinquent water bill payments... and running for his life from those who weren’t thrilled with his line of work.

But the 1970s and 80s flew by without Troy giving much thought to Dad’s career.

“I graduated from high school in 1989 and took a job loading UPS trucks while attending college,” Troy explained. “It was a tough schedule. I worked from 4 to 9 am, then went straight to school. That lasted for a couple of years.”

However, that grueling schedule prompted Baird’s most significant career decision, a couple of years later.

“The best move I ever made was going to work for a plumbing company,” he said. “I went through Dad’s backflow prevention class in 1991... earned a Journeyman Plumbing license in 1999... and became a Master Plumber in 2002.”

Along in that stretch, Troy also decided partnering with his parents in Bac-Flo Unlimited sounded like a pretty good idea. The Bairds created the company in 1995. Fred retired from San Antonio Water in 1999. And Mom, Dad and son have been growing the company together, since the turn of the millennium.

“We train people from Ohio, Louisiana, Kansas, Guam and many other places. Our training criteria is recognized nationwide.”

“Back in the 90s we travelled all over Texas to do training, from Amarillo (in the panhandle) to Brownsville (on the Mexico border),” Troy explained. “But as the company grew, we were able to shift to only teaching in Houston and San Antonio for about 15 years. Since COVID hit, we’ve been teaching only in (our Bac-Flo Unlimited training facilities in Boerne, 35 miles northwest of) San Antonio.”
A year ago, coronavirus forced the Bairds to completely cancel their training sessions for three months. Last June they resumed, with social distancing, masks and hand sanitizer. Class sizes have been limited to 15 people.

“We have built a decent clientele, and may not return to teaching classes in Houston, post-COVID,” Troy added. “We train people from Ohio, Louisiana, Kansas, Guam and many other places. Our training criteria is recognized nationwide. Bac-Flo Unlimited does everything backflow-related. We assist and consult with water departments, train personnel, enforce backflow programs and other things.”

In more recent years, Troy earned his irrigation license from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) in 2006 and his Business Management bachelor’s degree from Texas State University three years later.

Between earning the license and his degree, Troy married his wife Darcy in March 2007. Like his own father, Troy is now Dad to one daughter (Meagan, 12) and one son (Branson, 10).

ABPA came into Troy’s life through the San Antonio chapter his father founded.

“I’ve been the chapter supply officer since the late 1990s,” he explained. “That means I keep an inventory of supplies – caps, shirts and other things – available for our members to purchase. Then I was chapter treasurer from 2006 to 2014 and chapter president from 2015 to 2017.”

In the midst of that chapter presidency, Troy Baird also joined the ABPA Board of Directors when he was elected Region 4 Director in 2016 – a post he still holds.

“ABPA ties all water-related fields together: plumbing, fire suppression, irrigation, waste water. I have learned a lot by being a member of ABPA.”

In addition to his Region 4 directorship, Troy Baird is chairman of ABPA’s Public Awareness & Education Committee. One of that group’s biggest duties is to coordinate the annual Harrington-Arthur Memorial Essay Competition, which provides the winning entrant with a $1500 college scholarship.

“The essay contest has worked out great for ABPA because it really gets kids involved in understanding our industry,” Troy explained. “Coming up with the questions can be a challenge. But we enjoy reading them and selecting the winners.”

This year’s scholarship essay entry deadline is April 30. The 2021 topic is:

“Describe the meaning of backflow prevention and how we can keep our drinking water safe through cross connection control. Identify potential hazards commonly found in a typical residential household and discuss actions needed to correct them.”

When not on the job, Troy likes to hang out with his wife and kids in what he calls his “forever home.” They’re now putting in a swimming pool, with no plans to move.
“We live on five mostly-wooded acres on a quiet cul-de-sac,” Baird said. “We also like to go to the beach in our travel trailer. We’ve been all over Texas in it. And we enjoy our kids’ soccer and basketball games. Life’s good.”

Troy is also happy to work with that Dad he’s ordered to remain on the job to age 90.

“It just sort of happened that I joined my Dad (in Bac-Flo Unlimited),” Troy concluded. “It was my own decision – he never pressured me. As the years have gone by, we have grown together and gotten along better and better. We had no idea the company would take off the way it has; but I am very grateful.”

First-ever National Backflow Prevention Day: August 16, 2021
ABPA conference sponsor creates new industry “holiday”

Perhaps there aren’t a million of them – but there are plenty. Already this year, we’ve failed to pay proper homage to National Popcorn Day (January 19) and National Pizza Day (February 9). But we can still update our calendars by jotting in National Bathtub Racing Day (July 1) and National Bring Your Teddy Bear to Work Day (October 5).

Sure, many national day recognitions are pretty frivolous. But a few are actually intended to raise awareness about important issues. One of our major ABPA conference sponsors has recently accomplished the latter. Watts Water Technologies, Inc. led the charge earlier this year, to have August 16th now and forevermore recognized as National Backflow Prevention Day.

“It was a back-and-forth process, talking with (representatives of National Day Archives, LLC) to get the designation,” said Watts Water Technologies Marketing Campaign Manager Chase Niziak. “We first reached out in January and received the official (national day designation) letter in early March.”

During a recent ABPA Executive Committee virtual meeting, Niziak offered a power point presentation to explain his company’s thinking behind the day.

“Watts sought this designation because we want to bring light to this issue, which many people don’t know about,” he continued. “ABPA is a frontrunner in backflow prevention. We are reaching out to many industry partners so they can plan activities to mark the date.”

So why August 16? During the height of the Great Depression, 88 years ago, the Chicago World’s Fair attracted thousands of visitors from across the globe. Two popular hotels that housed tourists at the time shared the same rooftop potable water source, which was also used for heating and cooling purposes.

A lack of strict plumbing and cross connection control codes resulted in a backflow incident and an outbreak of Amoebic Dysentery caused by the hotels’ water supply.

As one of the world’s first documented backflow incidents, this case was reported on August 16, 1933. The disease quickly spread globally, resulting in some 2000 illnesses and 98 deaths.
After this worldwide tragedy, plumbing and listing laboratories were established – in larger cities across the nation – to research, test and list backflow prevention plumbing products, to be used in their respective jurisdictions.

In Los Angeles, the Cross-Connection Control Advisory Committee was formed, in 1941.

Two years later, another serious backflow incident occurred, this time at the Los Angeles/San Pedro Harbor. A World War II supply ship was filled with harbor water instead of potable water, making many people on board ill.

At this point, the Los Angeles Cross-Connection Control Advisory Committee approached the University of Southern California, requesting backflow and cross connection research. Several meetings later, in 1944, the Foundation for Cross Connection Control and Hydraulic Research (USC FCCCHR) was created, leading to new standards for backflow prevention assemblies.

“We might do a webinar or some type of giveaway to mark the (August 16) date; we haven’t firmed up those plans yet,” Niziak concluded. “We just want to do whatever we can to raise backflow prevention awareness. And we hope industry leaders like ABPA will want to do the same.”

Headquartered about 45 minutes north of Boston in North Andover, Massachusetts, Watts Water Technologies, Inc. (watts.com) employs 250 people at their corporate headquarters and 4800, worldwide. As the largest backflow prevention manufacturer in the world, the company’s 2020 annual sales were $1.51 billion.

So, don’t forget to pencil in the first-ever National Backflow Prevention Day on Monday August 16, 2021. It will sandwich in nicely between two longer-standing days: National Lemon Meringue Pie Day (August 15) and National Black Cat Appreciation Day (August 17).

But, as everyone in our industry realizes all too well, this newly-designated national day has much more life-and-death significance than most of the countless others.

Certification Program Update

Training vs Certification: There’s a big difference
By Mike Ahlee, Certification Programs Administrator & Henry Chang, Certification Committee Chair

This article is intended to clarify the American Backflow Prevention Association’s (ABPA) Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester (Tester) and Cross Connection Control Specialist (Specialist) Certification Programs.

The two certification programs have minimum qualification requirements applicants must meet to qualify to apply to ABPA to take the respective examination for either of these two certifications.

These qualifications are referenced in the Tester and Specialist Rules, on the ABPA website. Each certification program operates in accordance with the following:

1. Rules governing the certification, as adopted by the ABPA Board of Directors, and
2. Operations and procedure manual as developed by the ABPA Certification Committee.

There has been some confusion regarding the relationship between ABPA and the training community. ABPA does not provide, authorize or endorse any training provider in pursuit of these two certifications.
Each certification ABPA offers is a 3rd party voluntary certification program. This means ABPA serves as a neutral 3rd party (separate from the training provider and applicant) to develop and administer the examination process for the applicant.

ABPA further operates its program as voluntary, meaning it can be reviewed and accepted by the local administrative authority having jurisdiction (i.e., health agency, water supplier, etc.). ABPA does not actively pursue acceptance by local administrative authorities, but will provide program information for their review when requested.

If a local administrative authority accepts or adopts the ABPA certification program(s), then the applicant who successfully completes the ABPA examination process, and is granted certification, may operate in that area as an ABPA certified Tester or Specialist.

The examination process is administered by ABPA exam monitors and proctors, and no others. The Tester examination process consists of two steps:

1. A 100-question, multiple choice, closed book written exam, and
2. A hands-on performance exam where the applicant must correctly field test four assembly types (RP, DC, PVB & SVB), identify working and non-working modes and correctly transfer the data to a field test form.

The performance exam is also a closed book exam and the applicant may not have any assistance from any source, written or other modes of prompting of field test procedures. **No trainer may administer the performance exam to an applicant who was one of their students.**

The Specialist exam is a 100-question, multiple choice, closed book written test. The examination process for each certification discipline was created by the ABPA Certification Committee, after performing a job analysis.

The job analysis was completed to determine key tasks performed by a Tester or Specialist, and what knowledge and skills were needed to perform those tasks. This insured the examination process could be developed to reflect those key tasks. The key tasks and knowledge are identified in the Need-to-Know Criteria for both the Tester and Specialist.

ABPA posts the Need-to-Know Criteria on its website, available to any training provider. The Need-to-Know Criteria for Tester and Specialist Certification Programs clearly defines the knowledge and skills an applicant must be proficient in to pass the examination(s).

ABPA further does not allow any training provider to administer the performance examination to one of their own students. **Only an ABPA appointed 3rd party certified proctor may administer the examination to an applicant.**

To maintain a uniform performance exam process, ABPA has adopted a specific set of backflow preventer field test procedures. The performance exam is based on the backflow prevention assembly field test procedures of an RP, DC, PVB & SVB as contained in the USC FCCCHR Manual of Cross-Connection Control 10th Edition. These field test procedures were adopted by the ABPA Certification Committee in 2011, after a detailed review of the various field test procedures used in different areas.

Only ABPA has the authority to schedule ABPA examinations for the Tester and Specialist certification programs. An ABPA Tester or Specialist examination may be requested to follow the final day of a training class, but this is not guaranteed. The training provider must request this scheduling of an exam at least 60 days in advance. ABPA must approved the date and time requested.
When an applicant successfully completes the examination process, this will lead to issuance of a certification from ABPA only. No other affiliate or agency is referenced. ABPA has spent considerable time and effort developing an examination process to determine if a person has achieved the minimum proficiency of the Need-to-Know Criteria for the two different disciplines of Tester or Specialist.

ABPA goes to great effort and time to assure the examination process is independent of the training provider and the applicant. Further, written questions are handled in a way to assure they are secure and not copied or provided outside the examination process. ABPA has gone to great efforts to assure the testing process remains valid.

No training provider or institution may say or imply they have any endorsement, recommendation or affiliation with ABPA to provide training for ABPA certification programs.

ABPA maintains all rights to control and use of its name and logo. As per section 1.02 of the Association Rules, “The name, acronym, logo and other official labels of the Association shall be the sole possession of the Association. Use or reference of any of these names is prohibited unless allowed in writing by the Board of Directors.”

No training provider or institution may say or imply they have an affiliation with ABPA in any advertisement or correspondence.

Should you require any additional information, please contact ABPA at info@abpa.org.

Chapters’ Corner

AZ & VA ABPA chapter leaders are ‘cautiously optimistic’
We are finally headed back to some facsimile of ‘normal’

As more and more of us receive coronavirus vaccines – and watch the national infection and mortality rates start to dip – it seems only natural we can finally begin making out that light at the end of the tunnel.

From coast-to-coast, your ABPA chapters are slowly becoming more active. For most, it’s time to play catch up. Instructors are booking more classes, while proctors are travelling to more exams, to accommodate those who were challenged to meet certification deadlines over the past year.

In this Chapters’ Corner, we peek in on a pair of state ABPA chapters – at opposite ends of our country – that have limped through these last 12 months, like the rest of us, and are finally back to feeling just a little optimistic about the future.

Arizona (AZBPA) Chapter

At times during this pandemic, Arizona had the highest per capita COVID-19 infection and death rate in the country. That tragic fact hit Arizona Chapter President Jose Garcia as hard as anyone.

AZBPA’s popular “Vendors’ Spotlight” will be back again this August.
“My Dad was hospitalized with COVID before Christmas and passed away January 5th,” he said. “The day he died, I began feeling symptoms. I was tested the next day… and learned I was positive, January 7th.”

Garcia quarantined at home – locked in a room away from his wife and two daughters – for two weeks, where he recovered on his own. He did not have to go to the hospital and other family members remained COVID-free.

Meantime, many AZBPA Chapter members were struck hard by death in another way. On New Year’s Day, long time test proctor George Jasinek passed away. Ironically, coronavirus did not claim his life, even though he was at high-risk for the virus, having undergone a double lung transplant 12 years earlier.

One of George’s closest friends, former ABPA International President (1997-99) Ken Ashlock reports, Jasinek died of melanoma skin cancer.

“He was a good guy and we miss him terribly,” Ashlock said of his friend. “George was retired military. He worked in a plumbing unit in the Viet Nam War. I taught George backflow testing in the late 1980s and we remained friends. He was a staunch believer in backflow prevention. All the years he worked as an exam proctor, he never accepted any pay. He felt it was his duty to help out.”

In 2019, the AZBPA Chapter presented Jasinek with its “Meritorious Service Award.” Chapter President Garcia also remembers him fondly.

“George was my teacher when I first became a backflow tester,” Garcia said. “He became a good friend. I was lucky to know him.”

As they work to put tragedy behind them, AZBPA Chapter leaders voted last month to restore one of their most popular summer activities. In August, members will flee 115° Phoenix for the more comfortable climate of northern Arizona’s Watson Lake, outside Prescott.

“This will be our third Vendors’ Spotlight event,” Garcia explained. “It will be outdoors, at the lake pavilion. We give six vendors a half hour each to describe their products. In the past, they’ve come in from California, Oregon and Arizona. We serve lunch and snacks. The vendors pay for it; so it’s free to our members. Our first Vendors’ Spotlight was in 2018, and the second the following year. We had to cancel last year because of the virus.”

While the elevation in Phoenix is 1100’, Watson Lake – 100 miles north of the city – is at 5100’. Garcia says the temperature for the previous two Vendors’ Spotlight events was closer to 75°.

Waiting in the wings to ascend to the AZBPA chapter presidency is current Vice President Ron Long.

“COVID has thrown off our schedule and delayed my move to president,” Long said. “But I am excited and ready to go when the time comes.”

“We have about 100 chapter members and were going strong before COVID hit. I’m confident we’ll get them active again, now that things are improving.”

-Jose Garcia
Finally, the AZBPA Chapter Board of Directors is already making plans for their annual conference a year from now. It will be their first since 2019, after coronavirus cancelled the gathering last year and again this month.

“We have about 100 chapter members and were going strong before COVID hit,” Garcia concluded. “I’m confident we’ll get them active again, now that things are improving.”

**Virginia ABPA Chapter**

Some 2100 miles east of Arizona, Virginia ABPA Chapter President Chris Mayhew is now into his third year at the helm, after the previously-elected vice president recently moved out of the area.

“I’ve been chapter president since January 2019 and we have about 125 members,” Mayhew explained. “Our VP was scheduled to become president this year, before he relocated out of state. We’ll have a new VP soon, who will finish out this year, before replacing me, as president. In November, we’ll get back on schedule at our annual conference, when we elect a new VP.”

Like nearly every other ABPA event across the country last year, the Virginia chapter’s annual conference was cancelled in 2020. But Mayhew is “pretty sure” they will be able to hold their event this year, since it is still more than seven months away. But he’s hedging a bit.

“This is Virginia; our infamous governor may still have us in total lockdown,” he said. “We aren’t Florida or Texas. We may still have full restrictions with an order to wear a prophylactic over our head.”

Assuming it is held, Mayhew expects their annual conference to return to the Clarion Hotel in Williamsburg, very near the 300-acre living history museum, Colonial Williamsburg. It is touted as the “world’s largest living history museum, portraying American life in the 1700s.”

“It’s a one-day conference, on a Friday, and many of our members spend the weekend to visit the historic site,” Mayhew added. “We will survey our members to see who will be willing to come. This may be the first opportunity for a lot of people to get back out into the world.”

The Virginia chapter is the most recent to join ABPA, organizing in 2014. For many years before that, the Virginia Cross Connection Control Association was unaffiliated with ABPA. Now the only ABPA chapter in the area, active members come in from Maryland, Pennsylvania and Washington D.C.

The chapter’s current Past President, Tom Fauber, was only their second president ever.

“The chapter officially formed in November 2014, and our first president was Tim Brown, who went on to be the (International) ABPA President and is now Past President,” Fauber said. “Then I became Virginia Chapter President in 2017 and Past President in 2019.”

Fauber added, Virginia ABPA Chapter members are still working to recover emotionally from a tragic event. On May 31, 2019, a disgruntled and armed Virginia Beach city employee fatally shot 12 employees in Building 2 of the Virginia Beach Municipal Center. Among those killed was Kate Nixon, 42, wife, mother of three and the original ABPA Virginia Chapter Treasurer, under Brown.

“We were headed in a really good direction until COVID hit. The virus really took the wind out of our sails.”

- Chris Mayhew
“Everyone loved Kate and that hit us all very hard,” Fauber added. “We had about 125 attendees at our 2018 state conference, but fewer than 100 (after the shooting) in November 2019. No one attended from Virginia Beach. It was just a horrible tragedy.”

Less than a year after the mass shooting (where responding police officers shot and killed the gunman), virus lockdowns began.

“We were headed in a really good direction until COVID hit,” President Mayhew said. “Pre-COVID, I was teaching backflow classes to about 50 people per year, travelling all over the state. But I have not taught a class in more than a year. The virus really took the wind out of our sails.”

But like so many ABPA chapter officials across the country, optimism is beginning to return in Virginia.

“If things open up this year, as we expect, I can’t imagine how many classes I will have to teach,” Mayhew concluded. “People need to get caught up (with their certifications). This year could be a gangbuster.”