



# NEWSLETTER ~ SUMMER 2012

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## Plans For 2013 Convention Announced

The Wisconsin Geothermal Association will hold its 2013 Annual Conference on February 13 and 14 in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. We're especially excited to be holding the conference at The Osthoff Resort ([The Osthoff Resort](#)), one of only two premier AAA Four Diamond resorts in Wisconsin.

Located just east of Fond du Lac, the resort combines a casual atmosphere with elegant surroundings. The all-suite resort features many indoor and outdoor activities - including the Aspira Spa.

The ballrooms and meeting rooms are well-appointed, the restaurants are first-class, and there are plenty of places to continue conversations after the conference activities have concluded for the day. The program will begin around noon on Wednesday, February 13 and continue through lunch on Thursday, February 14. Once again, the conference will feature keynote speakers, breakout sessions, a vendor showcase and exhibit area, and plenty of time for networking over a meal or a beverage. The WGA will also conduct its annual meeting during the conference.

The WGA room block is guaranteed through January 16 and rooms are available at a special rate on Tuesday (2/12) and Wednesday (2/13). Mention "Wisconsin Geothermal Association/WGA" to get our preferred rate.

**Standard Room \$99; Two-Bedroom Suite \$139**

A one-night deposit is charged when you reserve your room. You may cancel your reservation, but a modest service charge applies.

**Make your reservations today by calling (855) 8763399.**

***Are you interested in presenting at the conference? Contact WGA with your program ideas!***

***Registration/sponsorship information coming in October/November!***

***Please keep us in mind for exhibits, sponsorships, and door prizes!***



## **Building Contractor Registration**

We want to remind contractors that they are, under current law, required to be registered as contractors under a program administered by the Department of Safety & Professional Services. The Building Contractor Registration (BCR) costs \$100.00 for four years and was implemented about three years ago. The idea of the BCR was three-fold. First, it was designed to help identify contractors in the state so that the DSPS could communicate with them. Up until that point, only trades with licenses and/or other certifications were providing contact information to the agency.

Similarly, the BCR was designed to spread the cost of agency expenses to the entirety of the building industry rather than just a few trades. By way of example, the DSPS was administering general building codes but was relying on licensed programs such as plumbing and electrical to provide the revenue for agency operations.

Finally, the BCR was implemented as a step in helping to identify and prosecute companies that were not legitimate businesses and who were using Independent Contractor status as a means to avoid payroll and other taxes and required insurances.

Trades that were otherwise registered with the state did not need to register. For geothermal contractors holding an HVAC business certification, you are exempt from the BCR requirements. Well drillers are specifically exempted, but there is a gray area when it comes to drilling wells used for vertical loop geothermal systems. 2011 Act 156 gives DNR authority over heat exchange drill holes, so it is questionable as to whether DSPS has any regulatory relationship with drillers. Water well drillers are clearly exempt, but when drill holes are used for other purposes, it's less cut and dried, but we will argue that you need NOT register. Let us know if this comes up on your project(s).

If you want more information about the BCR or still need to register, go to: [BCR Information](#).

The BCR has come under the scrutiny of the building industry which wants to be sure that if the program remains in place, it is meeting its stated goals. If the program is considered for elimination during the state budget cycle - the most likely scenario - we'll let you know.

## **Sewage Geothermal Systems - Catching On?**

*World Wide Geothermal Resource* ran an article last month on the topic of sewage geothermal systems. The article mentioned that systems had been built in China, saving 45 percent of heating costs on one project, and in Paris, providing enough energy to remove from the grid as much as 10 percent of the electrical demand in sections of the city where the systems are installed.

Closer to home, a city in Minnesota is in the process of using its municipal sewage system to provide energy savings and in New Jersey, there are sewage geothermal systems already in place and there will almost certainly be talk soon - if there isn't already - about using sewage geothermal systems in Wisconsin. The systems operate on the same principles as in-ground geothermal systems, but there are a host of questions to answer as the systems begin to become more common.

Energy-saving and water-saving technologies have blurred the distinction between building components that have historically been the domain of one trade over another. Roofs used to be for shelter only, but now they produce energy. Does that make them electrical devices? And wastewater used to be part of the building's plumbing system, not a component of the HVAC system. We'll see where all of this leads....

## Can I....

We received a call from an energy consultant asking about the location of a loop field for a horizontal geothermal system. Specifically, the question was whether or not the loop field could be located under the mound system that the property owners were going to have installed.



The Department of Natural Resources doesn't regulate horizontal loop fields, so we checked with the Department of Safety & Professional Services. In most respects, code related to the plumbing system is going to take priority over the HVAC system, so we checked with a code consultant on things like setbacks and other issues related to the mound system.

While there aren't specific setbacks as it relates to geothermal systems, there is a section of the code that talks about the quality of the soil in the area where the mound is being constructed. Turns out that a soil disturbance similar to the one needed to install the horizontal loop system would almost certainly disqualify the area as being viable for the mound system. While nothing in the code is absolute - or minimally, the code consultant is going to leave a little "wiggle room" for themselves - it seems that the horizontal loop system in this instance will need to be located elsewhere on the property.

If you have questions such as these, let us know and we'll get the answers you need. With your permission, we'll remove all of the identifying information and share some of these answers with your fellow contractors. And if you disagree with the answer we report, let us know that too. If the industry isn't reporting back to the regulators about other perspectives, we're missing out on the opportunity to have our input on code development and interpretation - a valuable service of your association.

## ATCP 110

ATCP 110 may sound like something you'd find at a store that sells vitamins, but it's an administrative rule. ATCP stands for Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and this particular rule (110) deals with contracts.

Somewhere along the line, a homeowner got burned on a contract. They complained and legislators stepped in to create a consumer protection law that would keep such a thing from happening again. From that law, we have ACTP 110. And as good intentioned as the law and the rule may be, there are some issues....

Most recently, we've seen ATCP 110, and more specifically it's penalty provision, used against contractors. The rule allows homeowners to seek treble (3x) damages if work was performed under an improperly-constructed contract. But three time *what*? The actual damage? The value of the contract?

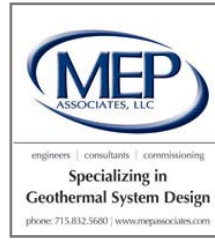
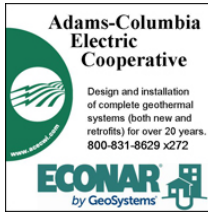
It pays to review your contracts - even if you have to pay to review your contracts....

Here are two helpful links. The first is to the rule itself, and the second is to a slide presentation that covers some of the relevant points. The slide show was produced by a law firm, but we're not endorsing them or the product, just providing a link. You can find other links by searching for ATCP 110, but when it comes time to reviewing your contracts, it's best to consult your attorney. If they've never heard of ATCP 110, find one that has or call us for the name(s) or firms that can help....

ATCP 110 - Click [HERE](#)

Slide Show - Click [HERE](#)

## Many thanks to our Annual Sponsors!



### Quotable

If you did not look after today's business then you might as well forget about tomorrow.

– Isaac Mophatlane

Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.

– Theodore Roosevelt

The most serious mistakes are not being made as a result of wrong answers. The truly dangerous thing is asking the wrong question.

– Peter Drucker

Ask five economists and you'll get five different answers - six if one went to Harvard.

– Edgar R. Fiedler

Regard it as just as desirable to build a chicken house as to build a cathedral.

– Frank Lloyd Wright

## Dues Investment

Membership in the WGA runs from July 1 to June 30. Members were sent statements regarding their 2012-2013 dues investment in June/July and we recently sent second notices to those who had not yet replied.

Your investment in our association is critical to our success. It's critical to our efforts in Madison to have a membership that represents the very best our industry has to offer - from one end of the state to the other. Even if you're not 100 percent sure that you need us, we are 100 percent certain that we need you. Your membership is an investment in the success of our industry....

And if investing isn't your thing, think of your membership a different way. Maybe you can buy insurance to protect your business, but who protects your industry? If you are not at the table, it's been said, then you are probably on the menu. We need to work collectively to protect what we have and to give this industry the chance to develop to its full potential, which is significant.

We thank everyone who has renewed and encourage those who have not yet renewed to do so today. If you need more information, please contact Jane at the WGA office at (262) 532-2440 or Jeff at his direct line of (414) 331-2059.



### **Learn the Fundamentals of Geothermal System Design**

Attend "Fundamentals of Geothermal System Design," a professional development course held on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus in Madison, Wisconsin, on September 25-27, 2012.

This 2-1/2 day course will combine theory with practical guidance to improve and enhance your geothermal design skills.

You will:

- Compare different types of geothermal systems and the principles that govern their design
- Learn why geothermal heating and cooling systems are more efficient (when properly designed) than conventional systems
- Understand when a geothermal heat pump system is a feasible system design alternative
- Identify strategies to enhance the energy efficiency of geothermal systems
- Understand the economics involved in system design and installation and the operating savings that are achievable
- Take home valuable course materials, including the textbook *Energy Exchange—Geothermal Exchange and Beyond*, authored by your experienced course instructor, Eric Dickie, founder of Delta Geothermal, Ltd.

Learn more and enroll at [www.epd.engr.wisc.edu/webN366](http://www.epd.engr.wisc.edu/webN366).

A promotional graphic for WaterFurnace. At the top, it says "Geothermal Done Right!" in bold black text. Below that is a circular logo containing a blue house with a white roof and a white geothermal loop. Underneath the logo is the "WaterFurnace" logo in blue and red, with the tagline "Smarter from the Ground Up™" in smaller black text. At the bottom, a blue banner contains the website "www.waterfurnace.com" and the toll-free number "877-424-0535" in white text.

**Geothermal Done Right!**



**WaterFurnace**  
Smarter from the Ground Up™

www.waterfurnace.com Toll Free 877-424-0535



## Geothermal Utility

The City of Wyandotte, Michigan created a geothermal utility last year and, with \$560,000 in grant money from the U.S. Department of Energy, embarked on a program where the City installs the well and owns and maintains the equipment outside of the home. The equipment placed inside the home would be the owner's responsibility. The City projects that, "...in 20 years, the majority of homes will be serviced by geothermal."

The city plans for 48 installations and expects that customers will save \$500 to \$1,000 per year in energy. It's unclear how the program will be self-sustaining after the grant money is exhausted. Under the program, the utility does any vertical drilling and installs horizontal fields. Piping is provided to the home where an HVAC contractor completes the installation.



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## Geo Ride - June 1

Many thanks to everyone who participated in the **7th Annual Geo Ride** on June 1. It was a great day for a ride and participants report having a great time. Be sure to join us next year! Details in early 2013....



## **2012-2013 WGA Board of Directors**



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