



# NEWSLETTER ~ Winter 2012

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## Join Us For The 2013 Annual Conference!



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.

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

**Standard Room \$99; Two-Bedroom Suite \$139**  
**Make your reservations today by calling (855) 876-3399.**

## Conference Keynotes Announced!

We are pleased to announce the following keynote speakers for our conference:

**Dave Ross, Secretary**  
**Wisconsin Department of Safety & Professional Services**

Secretary Ross joined Governor Scott Walker's cabinet in January 2011. The agency licenses 241 professional fields and houses 79 boards and councils. The Department also protects the safety, health, and welfare of Wisconsin's residents. Prior to coming to DSPS, Secretary Ross served for two terms as Mayor of Superior. He also served as a member of the board of directors of Superior-Douglas County Chamber of Commerce, Superior Business Improvement District, Superior-Douglas County Development Association, and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Mayors Initiative. Secretary Ross is a past director of the Wisconsin League of Municipalities.



**Tom Huntington, Chairman  
Geothermal Exchange Organization**

Tom Huntington is the Chairman of the Board of the Geothermal Exchange Organization (GEO), the U.S. geothermal heat pump (GHP) industry's primary political representative. Mr. Huntington's "day job" is president and CEO of WaterFurnace. As a volunteer leader for GEO, whose members include major manufacturers of geothermal equipment, Mr. Huntington will share his first-hand knowledge - both from GEO and from WaterFurnace - to talk about the challenges associated with advocating for geothermal in an increasingly crowded and competitive market.



**Worker's Compensation Changes**

Contractors can pay a lot of money for Worker's Compensation coverage. New rates were announced in September for renewals effective after October 1. Once again, manual rates remained relatively stable in most trades, including the rate for HVAC installers. Still, the amount you pay could be changing before long....

For one thing, "discounts" are getting harder and harder to come by. Even if the manual rate - the cost you pay per \$100 of payroll - remains the same, if your discount is cut in half, you'll be paying more for WC insurance in the next year. More than that, there are changes to the way in which Experience Modification Rates (EMRs) are calculated. For those with good claims experience, the change to EMR calculations will likely mean lower costs. But for those who have less-favorable claims experience, the effect of those claims on your EMR and, therefore, your overall cost of WC insurance, is likely to go up.



Rates are set annually by the Wisconsin Compensation Rating Bureau. Every two years, the Worker's Compensation Advisory Council meets to discuss changes to the benefits paid to injured workers. The Council is currently trying to deal with a pressing issue related to payments made to individuals who are permanently and totally disabled. Absent any action from the Council, benefits to some of these individuals may be rationed by the state. To fund the continuation of existing benefits, however, the Council must either approve an assessment against employers and insurance carriers, or find new sources of revenues and/or benefit cuts to close the gap between revenues and expenses.

The Council should complete its deliberations in June or July and the legislature should act on the Council's recommendations this fall. Any benefit changes would be effective January 1, 2014 and rates may move up or down in October 2013 to adjust for anticipated increases or decreases in costs in the system.

## WGA and ECW Sign Partnership Agreement

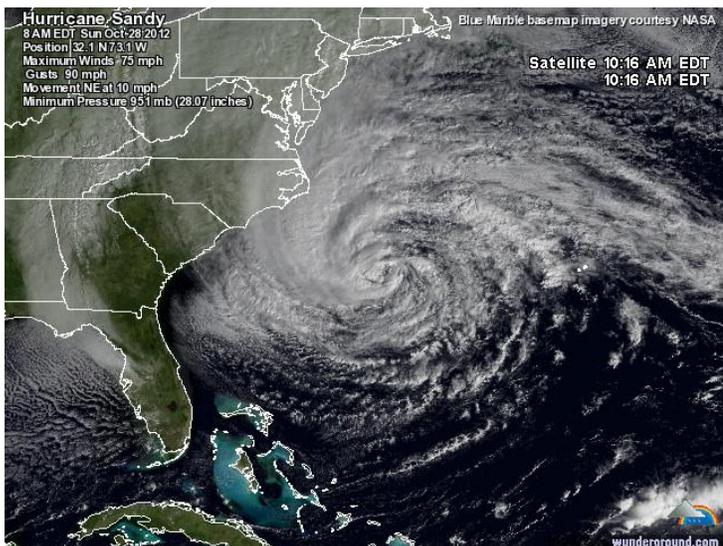
In an effort to provide additional benefit to the customers of both organizations, the WGA and the Energy Center of Wisconsin have entered into a Partnership Agreement. The Agreement provides additional exposure and outreach for the WGA and helps us in our mission to educate and advocate in support of increased use of geothermal systems.



Among other things, WGA members will periodically receive information about upcoming programs and conferences offered through ECW, including the Better Buildings: Better Business Conference that will take place March 6-8, 2013 in Wisconsin Dells, WI.

WGA continues to reach out groups who have common interests and is always looking for additional outreach activities that enhance our membership and our industry.

## Geothermal To The Rescue?



According to an article (see the article [HERE](#)) in *The New York Times*, Super Storm Sandy has created additional interest in geothermal systems. The article describes reports of, "...unearthed fuel tanks, ravaged cooling towers and battered air-conditioners."

Below ground and indoors, geothermal systems are largely protected from the effects of significant weather events and the storm has created interest among those who must replace their systems and those who may have escaped this storm, but wish to protect themselves against future storms.

## Geothermal Done Right!



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## **Senate Passes H.R. 4850; Bill Awaits House Action**

Contractor Magazine reported that the U.S. Senate unanimously approved H.R. 4850 on September 24. The legislation amends the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to specifically include geothermal as a means to achieve federal energy efficiency goals. Having been returned to the House of Representatives, that chamber must act between now and the end of the year or the bill will die and need to be reintroduced in the 2013/2014 session. With the "fiscal cliff" and debt ceiling debates ongoing, it's difficult to predict whether any legislation will be passed during the "lame duck" congressional session.

## **The Number One Question....**

Once or twice a week, we receive calls from individuals and/or businesses that are interested in learning more about the benefits of geothermal heating and cooling.

When it comes to answering questions like these, we can provide some basic information and sometimes that's all the caller needs. Sometimes, however, it's clear that the caller is looking for more detailed information. For those calls, we refer them to a local contractor, a manufacturer, or an engineer member depending upon which can best answer the caller's question(s).



As soon as the potential customer wants to know about cost - and that's the number one question - it's time for the caller to talk with a contractor member. Even if we could use a "rough estimate," there's just no way to know all of the project variables that might affect the cost of the project. This is the point where it is better to talk about qualifications than it is to talk money.

Installing a geothermal system takes knowledge and experience, we explain, and that's why we encourage potential customers to ask about WGA and other memberships, about IGSHPA (or similar) certification, about continuing education, and about authorized or certified dealer programs.

To promote quality projects, we recommend quality contractors and encourage potential customers to do their homework before the project begins and try to keep the focus not on price, but on value. If the system doesn't perform because of poor design or construction, it reflects badly on the entire industry. Protecting the image of the industry and promoting our members are all part of the services provided by WGA.

## **WGA Agrees To Support Geothermal Efforts At MEEA**



The Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (MEEA) is an energy efficiency organization whose members are utilities, regulatory agencies, manufacturers, consultants, auditors, etc. MEEA has existed for more than 10 years and has grown to become a powerful and influential organization.

In January of this year, the Geothermal Exchange Organization (GEO) and several state groups (like WGA) sponsored the MEEA conference and had a chance to speak with more than 500 participants that visited the expo area.

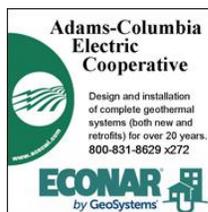
As part of our outreach efforts for 2013, WGA has committed to assisting GEO and joining our association partners in the Midwest to promote geothermal at the January 16-18 conference in Chicago.

## Geo Seminar - November 7

Many thanks to everyone who participated in the Geothermal: Simplicity By Design seminar on November 7 in Madison. Representatives from Focus on Energy were with us and Leo Udee (MEP) and Manus McDevitt (Sustainable Engineering Group) presented to an audience of contractors, architects, engineers, educators, and suppliers.

We are already planning for a similar program in 2013, possibly to include time in the classroom and time to view and discuss a commercial geothermal installation. Stay tuned for details....

## Many thanks to our Annual Sponsors!



## Geothermal Benefits

When you're so close to it, it's easy to overlook the benefits of a geothermal system over traditional heating/cooling...

- No outdoor condensing equipment.
- No carbon dioxide.
- No carbon monoxide.
- Lower energy bills.

- Lower operating costs.
- Lower maintenance costs.
- No flames.

## Quotable

*The hardest thing to understand in the world is the income tax. (Albert Einstein)*

*Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe. (Abraham Lincoln)*

## **Annual Meeting Set, Bylaws Changes Proposed, Nominees Sought**

The **Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Geothermal Association** will be held as follows:

**Wednesday, February 13  
4:45 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.  
The Osthoff Resort  
Palm Garden Ballroom  
101 Osthoff Avenue  
Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin**

The Board of Directors is recommending modifications of the WGA bylaws at the Annual Meeting. The changes are being recommended to reflect current law, current practices, and best practices among similar organizations. A copy of the proposed changes is being sent to all members. If you have questions about the proposed changes prior to the Annual Meeting, please contact WGA's Executive Director, Jeff Beiriger, at (414) 331-2059 or [jeff@assocmgmtservices.com](mailto:jeff@assocmgmtservices.com).

Also, the terms of three (3) directors are expiring at the Annual Meeting. If you or someone you know might be interested in serving on the Board of Directors of the WGA, please let us know of your interest by completing and returning a Nomination Form. You can get a form by contacting the WGA office. While we will accept nominations from the floor, it is helpful to identify candidates before the meeting to confirm their interest and to discuss the responsibilities associated with Board service.

## **California Legislature Passes Legislation To Evaluate Geothermal Expansion**

On unanimous votes in the Senate and Assembly, the California legislature passed AB 2339 which requires the California Energy Commission to consult with stakeholders to evaluate barriers to greater use of geothermal heating-cooling systems and to recommend policies for overcome such barriers. The charge to the Commission is to include an analysis of costs, energy savings, and environmental benefits and to determine if greater use of geothermal would help the state meet energy goals outlined in existing legislation.



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**Mark Flock – Vice President** (Director Term Ends 2013)  
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**Leo Udee – Secretary** (Director Term Ends 2014)  
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**Dave Mitchell – Treasurer** (Director Term Ends 2013)  
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**Jerry Brown** (Director Term Ends 2015)  
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