

FIRESIDE

UPDATE

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Ohio Licensing Incorporates NFI Certification



Greg Hill

Ohio is closer to making a decision on how to license fireplace installers. The Ohio Construction Industry Examining Board (OCIEB) is still hammering out details of the license, but the following are the highlights from a meeting

in Columbus on September 26.

The decision has been made to create a fireplace installers license that incorporates NFI certification. Once licensed, a fireplace company can do business throughout the state. There will be an annual licensing fee (amount to be determined). Cities and counties may require licensees to pay a registration fee.

A fireplace installation business will need only one license per company. The CEU program becomes very important to the license holder. To renew the annual license, the holder will have to prove completion of a certain number of CEUs through the year. It is possible that the license holder will have to take a new test every 3 to 5 years. The NFI test is being considered as one of two ways to obtain an Ohio license. At least one person in the business can take either the HVAC test or the NFI Gas, NFI Wood, or NFI Pellet test. Proof of one of these certificates will be needed to install any type of fireplace. The committee first considered requiring a license in each category, but after extensive discussion,

(continued on page 3)

Plan now for NFI Certification at EXPO in Anaheim

Those interested in earning one, two, or three of the NFI certifications can register now for manual review courses and exams at the HPBA EXPO March 17-20, 2004 to be held in Anaheim, California. This can be done by going on line at www.hpbexpo.com or by calling the NFI offices at (703) 524-8030.

The National Fireplace Institute® has seen over 2000 industry professionals test toward achieving the highest technical certification possible in the hearth industry. Public safety and recognized professionalism has been the goal of NFI since its inception in early 2002. Holding NFI certification gives hearth professionals a real competitive edge.

There are a number of reasons the NFI program has achieved its rapid level of success:

- **Ticket to your business success** – NFI Certification can be your ticket to do business in your state or jurisdiction without having to qualify for an HVAC, plumber's or any other inappropriate license. NFI Certification is becoming recognized as the basis for a specialty license to install hearth products by more and more jurisdictions. NFI Certification is our industry's solution to inappropriate licensing requirements.

- **Enjoy the respect of building and code officials** – Building and code officials prefer to work with certified contractors who have demonstrated their commitment to professional excellence through certification. Building officials are required to hold certifications in their own profession so they recognize the achievement that certification represents.
- **Beat the competition – have customers choose you!** – Consumers feel more confident hiring certified specialists because of their experience and knowledge. NFI Certification is the only certification that identifies those individuals passing an exam based on the knowledge needed to properly plan and install hearth products and their venting systems. Certification is regarded as an excellent indication of professional training and commitment.

Additional benefits of having certified specialists on staff include:

- Stopping the Revolving Door of Employee Turnover
Individuals who earn certification have more self-confidence and remain in their profession longer than non-certified individuals.

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Dan Maddox, Hearth Products Controls Co.

NFI Certification:

Page one of this Newsletter contains a report from Greg Hill on the new Ohio licensing rules. Greg is Chair of the MSHPBA Codes & Regulations Committee.

Initially, the OCIEB was going to require an applicant for the Hearth Products Installation license to have an HVAC license. Thanks to a lot of hard work on Greg's part, he persuaded them to accept an NFI Certification as adequate qualification.

The end result of this new rule states that if your company installs hearth products, your company must have at least one employee NFI Certified in gas, wood or pellet products. This kind of regulatory activity is taking place all over the USA. It is only a matter of time until it becomes practically universal. Be ready for it!

Here are more reasons to have one or more persons on your staff NFI Certified.

- 1) Train salespeople so they are better able to sell the right product
- 2) Train installers to do better, faster installations
- 3) Train service people to do better, faster diagnosis and correction of problems
- 4) Gives you a BIG advantage over your non-certified competitor
- 5) Saves you time/money and increases customer satisfaction

In addition to a listing of your store on a national website, NFI has a lot of material available to help you promote the certification; shoulder patches, logo decals, brochures, ID cards, etc.

Annual Meeting:

As discussed in the last edition of this newsletter, the 2003 MSHPBA Annual Meeting was bigger and better than any of our earlier ones. Member attendees found it valuable, fun and a good value.

The Board has selected the dates and location for the 2004 Annual Meeting. It will be June 13-14 at the Columbus Marriott Northwest in Dublin, Ohio. This is a convenient suburb on the Northwest side of Columbus.

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MSHPBA Office Staff

Fireside Update is published quarterly for members of the MSHPBA. Submission of articles is encouraged and welcome.

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Membership Has It's Privileges!

Gina Burkert
Program Coordinator

It's that time of year again and you should have already received your 2004 membership renewal notice in the mail. Be sure to renew today and don't miss your opportunity to belong to MSHPBA. This year, we are pleased to offer even more valuable benefits with no dues increase.

Members can take a look through the eyes of their customers with the Mystery Shopper program that was launched early this fall. You will receive a detailed report on your store's performance and a comparison with regional and national results.

By holding special affiliate only events, such as the MSHPBA EXPO Welcome Reception and the 2004 MSHPBA Annual Meeting in Columbus OH, we offer you the opportunity to network with hearth, patio and barbecue professionals in Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and West Virginia and earn NFI certification at the same time.

Stay informed about the hearth, patio and barbecue industry through MSHPBA newsletters and News Alerts, to get a "heads up" over the competition. MSHPBA has an active codes and regulations committee that distributed codes binders exclusively to its members in MI, OH, KY and WV, keeping you up-to-date on state codes or regulations that may affect our industry.

In addition, renewing your membership with MSHPBA ensures that you are participating in one of the stronger affiliates of the national HPBA. And remember, you must have your 2004 membership dues in before you can reserve your free passes to attend this year's EXPO in Anaheim.

Even if you don't plan to attend EXPO in 2004, we hope you agree that MSHPBA offers you great benefits. To receive a complete list of affinity programs please call 314-576-5333 or e-mail burkert@drakeco.com. 🔥

President's Letter (continued from page 2)

The schedule will again be such that Sunday night will be the only overnight unless you are staying for the NFI Certification on Tuesday.

John Ashby of Heat Exchange in North Ridgeville, Ohio is Chair of the Annual Meeting Committee. Utilizing input from the 2003 meeting evaluation, John is fine-tuning the program to make it even more "member friendly." More details will follow as they become available. If you have any desires, suggestions or questions, please get them to John.

Renewals:

Membership renewals have been mailed to all members. Please mail them back right away.

PLEASE NOTE: Even though the national HPBA has increased the share of dues that each affiliate must send to national and increased our cost, the Board has voted to **NOT** increase members' dues. We are thus counting on a high level of renewals and new members for the upcoming year. 🔥

Ohio Licensing Update

(continued from page 1)

the consensus was that if a business installs fireplaces and has one of the certificates, it would police itself to get the knowledge to install other products. Along with the certificate, the business will have to show proof of liability insurance of at least \$300,000 and proof of having been in operation for five years.

Grandfathering has been proposed to enable those already in the business to continue installing fireplaces while progressing toward receiving a license. All companies who want to continue installing fireplaces would need to prove five years of operation and provide a certificate of liability insurance. To renew, the company would then need an HVAC license, or one of the three NFI certificates, plus liability insurance. There will be further meetings to fine-tune the program. We will keep you updated.

Is licensing good or bad? Some will say bad because it costs money, brings more governmental intervention into our business, and that if the business – not the installer – is licensed, it really doesn't protect the consumer. I believe that despite the negatives, licensure is still a good thing for all of us in the fireplace industry in Ohio. State mandated criteria, testing, and fees would prevent people from merely putting a sign on a truck and calling themselves fireplace installers. This means more business for those professional enough to go through the licensing process. It also is good for homeowners using our services, because business owners who have the license are responsible for the actions of their employees and are liable if installations are not done properly. I also think that the OCIEB has worked very hard to give our industry a fair opportunity for input and is doing a good job of balancing the needs of Ohio businesses with their responsibility for protecting consumers. This is a WIN-WIN-WIN for businesses, customers, and the regulatory agency.

Plan now for NFI Certification at EXPO in Anaheim

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- Benefit from More Productive Employees – Certified individuals are more productive than non-certified ones due to their job preparation and learning.
- Validate the Knowledge of Your Employees – Be more confident of them.

Your staff is installing combustion products into homes – obtain peace of mind that the staff has demonstrated knowledge of hearth products, installation concepts and procedures through learning and an exam process.

At EXPO 2004, NFI offers Gas, Woodburning, and Pellet Certification packages for HPBA Members at \$349 for each person and Non-Members at \$499 each. Each package includes: One Hearth Systems Reference Manual, one 6-hour review course, and one exam. The 6-hour review course is a major benefit to the certification candidate because the candidate will:

- Participate in an overview of reference manual content highlights
- Confirm knowledge of manual contents from previous self-study
- Get last minute questions answered
- Provide confidence in important concepts from the study materials
- Have a higher probability of passing the exam 🔥

NFI SCHEDULE

Wednesday, March 17

8:30am – 3:30pm	Gas Certification Review Course
8:30am – 3:30pm	Woodburning Certification Review Course
8:30am – 3:30pm	Pellet Certification Review Course
4:00pm – 6:30pm	Exams

Thursday, March 18

8:30am – 3:30pm	Gas Certification Review Course
8:30am – 3:30pm	Woodburning Certification Review Course
5:30pm – 8:00pm	Exams

Friday, March 19

8:30am – 3:30pm	Gas Certification Review Course
8:30am – 3:30pm	Pellet Certification Review Course
5:30pm – 8:00pm	Exams

Saturday, March 20

1:00pm – 3:30pm	Exams
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Register on line at www.hpbexpo.com or call (703) 524-8030 for more NFI info.

All Fired Up! Get a “log up” on your competitors and become NFI certified today.

Congratulations to the following NFI Certified Professionals currently in our affiliate...

Joe Albridge, Moulton Gas Service Inc.
John R. Auker, Millstone Home Appliance Center
Kevin Baker, Williams Hearth and Home
Doug Ball, Grate Balls Afire, LLC
Matt Beam, Earth Friendly Stoves, Inc.
Coleen L. Behr, Behr Necessities Hearth Shoppe, Ltd.
Michael J. Behr, Behr Necessities Hearth Shoppe, Ltd.
Russell E. Biggs, Fireplace Shoppe of Northfield Inc.
Steve Blackburn, Blackburn's Chimney Sweeps
Kathleen Bodenlos, DESA Heating Products
Joseph T. Bosze, Fireplace Shoppe of Northfield Inc.
John R. Botsford, Today's Fireplace
Richard L. Brill, H2Oasis, Inc.
John S. Buchanan, Monessen Hearth Systems
James J. Chambers, DESA International
Brian Collins, Williams Hearth and Home
Mark Collins, Williams Hearth and Home
Thomas P. Coward, Monessen Hearth Systems
Mike Crossley, Williams Hearth and Home
Gabriel Damian, Today's Fireplace
Jeremy D. Davis, DESA International
Gene Dawson, B & G Fireplace & Patio
Thomas W. Dazey, The Dapper Co.
Rhett Dudgeon, North Central Insulation Inc.
Chad D. Dunlap, Moulton Gas Service Inc.
Steve Dyer, Today's Fireplace
Eric Feller, Hearthland Sales Inc
Christopher M. Forman, Chimney Specialist Inc.
David H. Foudray, Kerns Fireplace and Spa
Robert D. Fowler, Creative Fires, LLC
Robert Francis, Williams Hearth and Home
Jeff Goodall, Williams Hearth and Home
William D. Graven, DESA International

David A. Hagans, DESA International
Eric D. Haldeman, Millstone Home Appliance Center
Jamie Hall, DeHaven Home & Garden Showplace
Rick L. Harrell, The Backyard
David Harrison, Holly Showcase
Brian M. Harter, Moulton Gas Service Inc.
Kristopher Hatcher, DESA Heating Products
Derrick O. Hendrick, DESA International
Garry J. Hosmer, The Dog Paddle, Inc.
Chuck Hudson, Tate Builders Supply, LLC
Michael L. Huss, Overhead Door of Toledo
Sam Ingram, Woodland Chimney
Brian L. Jackson, Chimney Specialist Inc.
Jamie Jarrard, Williams Hearth and Home
Michael S. Jones, DESA International
James Kregger, Williams Hearth and Home
Charles Krosch, DESA International
Joseph B. Lee, DESA International
Bill Libby, Williams Hearth and Home
Pete Loudon, Today's Fireplace
Thomas M. Lucas, Denger's Inc.
Mike G. Mann, The Grate Haus
Christopher D. Market, Moulton Gas Service Inc.
Gary Martin, Today's Fireplace
Jim McKee, Blackburn's Chimney Sweeps
Arthur L. Meier, Pine Tree Heating & Air Conditioning, LLC
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David Millican, Great Lakes Energy Systems
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Chad Morris, Monessen Hearth Systems
Peter L. Morris, Aspen Fireplace & Patio, Inc.
Kevin Moss, Williams Hearth and Home
Scott Oakes, Hearth & Home Technologies, Inc.

Michael D. O'Bryant, Patio Enclosures
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Keith Ranger, Konieczka Heating and Cooling, Inc.
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David W. Reeves, Smokeland Fireplace
Thomas G. Rhines, All-Chimney Cleaning & Maintenance
Tom Ronnebaum, Williams Hearth and Home
Jim Sanders, Tate Builders Supply, LLC
Miguel Santiago, Grate Balls Afire, LLC
Matt Schultz, Williams Hearth and Home
Ricky Shumaker, Creative Fires, LLC
Cynthia Seebauer, Busy Bear Fireplace & Patio Shop
Peter Seebauer, Busy Bear Fireplace & Patio Shop
Dave Smith, Today's Fireplace
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Kevin W. Yowler, Hearth Products Controls Co.
Jeff Zarembo, Custom Fireplace Shop
Jason J. Zeeryp, Positive Chimney & Fire Place



The MSHPBA Board is currently looking at dates and locations to offer the NFI Review Course and Exam in 2004. If you have suggestions, please contact the affiliate office at 314-576-5333 or via e-mail at burkert@drakeco.com.

5 Marketing Tips For The Holidays

David Batchelor

This article excerpted from the October 1 edition of Affiliate Reports, an e-mail newsletter supplied from www.AffiliateReports.com.

As the holidays approach, you probably are expecting a dramatic slow-down in your business – especially in December. Most people think it's because the holidays are a slow time for business and that people don't want to get involved in a new business venture at this time. But really the main reason for this slow-down in business is because most people just stop doing business during the holidays. But savvy networkers know that the holidays are really a perfect time to do business, and that they just need to adjust their marketing strategies a bit to fit the season.



1) Holiday Time is Great for Prospecting!

Holiday Time usually means parties and lots of socializing – why not use this to your advantage and do a little informal prospecting. Here's some advice that I give my team about prospecting during the holidays: The kids are home from school, family is in town, or people are traveling. The trick is not to look at these things as reasons to stop doing business, but rather, as opportunities to expand business. When the kids are home from school, they're usually doing activities. These normally include other children, and therefore, other parents. Instead of talking about the kids and “things,” expand your conversation a little. Talk about Family, Occupation, Recreation, and Money (FORM for short). People usually open up if you're a good listener. At some point, they'll ask about you and yours. Don't go into a heavy sales pitch. Remember, you're just having a nice conversation. If you feel like you've made a new friend and sparked their curiosity you've done your job. And remember, new people can be found anywhere – standing in a long line at a theme park or at a social event or family gathering. If you are constantly talking and planting seeds during the holidays, your business never has to slow down.

2) Cash in on the Gift Giving Season

Tis the season for gifts, so get creative! Here's a few ideas to try: Put together some gift baskets of your company's products that are ready to go and that appeal to a variety of customers. Everyone gets

stressed out trying to find just the right presents, so offer them a stress free shopping solution that's hard to refuse – set up personal appointments with your customers at their convenience – visit them at the office, take them to lunch, or come to their home on the weekend or evenings. Make it easy for them to do business with you. Sell gift certificates! Call your customers or drop them a holiday postcard and tell them that you have gift certificates on sale.

3) Get a Jump on January

Do some business planning in December to get ready for business in January. This is the single best month for doing business. Get a special mailing together for your prospects and customers and have it ready to go in the mail in early January.

4) Keep On Doing What You've Been Doing

Don't abandon your business during the holidays. Try to stick as closely as you can to your regular schedule – and if you just can't keep up the pace – at least decide to accomplish something every week that keeps your business humming. It'll be a lot easier to gear up in the new year if you do!

5) Send A Thank You Note!

Be sure to send a holiday greeting letting your customers and team know that you appreciate them. It takes some time to do this, but the results are well worth it! Thank You notes build trust – the most important element in any relationship including business. 🔥

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Todd Brabender

This article excerpted from the October 1, 2003 edition of "Family Business Strategies" an e-mail newsletter supplied from IBIZ.com.

The call came into my office and the voice on the other end was very energetic, almost giddy: "I have finalized my marketing budget and need your help launching an advertising campaign for my new product," he breathed.

"Congratulations," I replied, "but before we implement an ad campaign, I want to make sure you have explored potential PUBLICITY opportunities that could generate some cost-efficient media exposure first." Then, silence. "I never thought about that," he sighed. "Frankly, I don't know much about it."

He is not alone. It's a common conversation. Although many entrepreneurs or business people know a bit about publicity or media exposure, the majority of them simply don't understand the full benefits of "publicity placements" or how to go about generating them successfully. Publicity placements have always been a cost-efficient way to market a product/business and generate clients or customers, but because of lack of knowledge or a misunderstanding of what publicity is and does, many entrepreneurs don't take full advantage of publicity opportunities – and that can lead to missed marketing chances.

Many entrepreneurs don't take full advantage of publicity opportunities.

I recently surveyed a few dozen business owners and entrepreneurs in some newsgroups and business chat rooms about their knowledge of "publicity placements" in the media.

I found out that only 37% knew that a simple "product profile" in a magazine was generated as a result of pub-

licity efforts. Most thought the company had paid the media outlet to run the feature, much like an ad. And of that 37%, less than half of them knew HOW to generate a similar placement.

We see editorial placements from publicity efforts everyday in the media.

Another interesting fact, because of the recent slowdown in the economy, expensive advertising budgets have been slashed. As a result, many businesses, like your competitors, are turning to publicity/PR campaigns as a more affordable means of marketing to compete with other companies.

Here are some ways to use publicity placements to help your business:

Editorial Placements/Media Notification

What some entrepreneurs might not realize is that we see editorial placements from publicity efforts everyday in the media: product profiles, feature articles and contributed by-lined articles in magazines, newspapers, trade industry newsletters or on TV/radio/cable newscasts & shows.

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The Increasing Power of Publicity (continued from page 6)

This is not advertising, this is “EDITORIAL Placement” or “Media Notification” of a product, business or industry expert. Notify the appropriate media that your newsworthy product is on the market or your business is offering a unique new service and let them run a feature placement that will spread that message to your consumer market.

A positive editorial placement such as a product profile in a magazine or a newspaper can be much more persuasive than a glossy, over-hyped advertisement.

These placements can detail your product or business very effectively, giving consumers some objective, pertinent information that may well entice them to become future customers.

These editorial placements are looked upon much more credibly than ad placements. That is not a slam on advertising. Paying for advertising placements is indeed an effective way to market your product.

But the fact is, a positive editorial placement such as a product profile in a magazine or a newspaper can be much more persuasive than a glossy, over-hyped advertisement – and a fraction of the cost.

Make sure your media message is solid, contains newsworthy angles and isn't disguised as overly commercialized ad copy.

My point is that editorial placements are an overlooked marketing vehicle for a business, and that entrepreneurs should understand the full benefits of these placements to make the most of their marketing efforts.

Editorial placements are a wonderfully reciprocal way for you and the media to work together for the betterment of your business. The media needs to fill its pages and airtime with interesting information – and you need to get the word out to your market.

Research the media market to find those media outlets and editorial contacts with which you can forge that mutually beneficial relationship. But you have to do your part and do it right – or the media will forge that relationship with your competitor.

Make sure your media message is solid, contains newsworthy angles and isn't disguised as overly commercialized ad copy. Have high-quality photos and media samples available and do all you can to make the media's job of featuring your product as simple as possible.

It also helps to have some sort of clipping service in place to track your placements and get you copies so you can

use them in your secondary marketing programs.

Expert Branding

This type of publicity placement generating takes advantage of the expert knowledge within a particular business. It is an effective tool for entrepreneurs whose businesses are more service related, like consultants or specialists.

Expert branding basically treats the expert like a product. Alert the media as to your expertise on a specific topic and avail yourself to serve as an expert interview resource for future articles or news feature segments.

Additionally, the expert should write a few brief articles on a specialized topic and make them available to editors for review and possible publication.

Editorial placements are a wonderfully reciprocal way for you and the media to work together.

The challenge of this type of publicity placement is the tedious task of finding out which outlets accept “expert editorial contributions” or contributed by-lined articles in their publications.

Again, it comes down to meticulously researching your media market to find those media outlets that may be in need of the editorial content that you can provide them. With some creativity, expert branding can be effective for product-based businesses as well.

Overall, when using the media to help market your product or business, take advantage of as many FREE media opportunities as you can. If you lack the expertise or time, a PR agency or publicist can generate the editorial placements for you.

But the fee you pay them is a FRACTION of what it would cost you to buy similar sized ad placements. And those publicity placements typically lead to a much better consumer response right out of the gate – which is just what you need to boost your business to the next level. 🔥

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HPBA EXPO in Anaheim, CA
- ✓ March 19, 2004
MSHPBA Affiliate "Aloha" Party at the
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- ✓ June 13-14, 2004
MSHPBA Annual Meeting
in Columbus, OH



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