

# NFI Registration Form

**YES! I want to become NFI certified!**



Register me for the following 2005 NFI Courses

**Ann Arbor**  Gas - June 23  Wood - June 24  
**Cleveland**  Gas - August 11  Wood - August 12

Company \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone# ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax# ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Name #1 \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Name #2 \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed (please make payable to MidStates HPBA)

Charge to:  Discover  Visa  MasterCard

Account # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to:** 16020 Swingley Ridge Rd., Suite 300  
Chesterfield, MO 63017  
636.449.5075 • Fax 636.449.5051  
ammann@drakeco.com  
www.midstateshpba.org

## NFI Locations and Information:

For more information see pg 1

### Ann Arbor Location:

Weber's Inn  
3050 Jackson Road  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103  
Phone: 800-443-3050

### Cleveland NFI Location:

Hilton Garden Inn Cleveland  
Downtown  
1100 Carnegie Avenue  
Cleveland, OH  
Phone: 216-658-6400

NFI Review and Exam FEES:  
Member Rate \$349  
Non Member Rate \$499

*Fees include: study materials,  
review course, exam and box lunch.*

# FIREPLACE UPDATE

A member benefit of MidStates HPBA

MAY, 2005 • VOL. 6, NO. 2

## Why Certify?

**NFI certification offers benefits to installers, business owners and the hearth industry at large.**



### Rachel Plumb, Winning Formula Communications

As a retailer and sales representative of today's increasingly technical hearth products, Greg Hill is always trying to be more competitive. Earning the NFI certification in 2002 was a way to gain credibility in the eyes of clients and colleagues.

Hill encourages certification of his service team, even though certification is time consuming. "It is critical that hearth products be installed properly," says Hill owner of Custom Fireplace Shop in North Canton, OH. "NFI certification gives your installers the knowledge and credentials we need in this business."

Hill also endorses certification as a board member and supporter of MidStates HPBA's mission – to represent the hearth products industry and promote the best interest of its members. Certification benefits the entire industry by raising professional standards and is a must-have for conscientious member businesses and their employees.

MidStates HPBA makes certification review and testing available to its members through the National Fireplace Institute (NFI) certification agency, which tests on safety and placement, venting requirements and installation guidelines.

According to NFI, certification is a form of self-regulation that may pre-empt the fireplace industry from being regulated by an

outside authority. While NFI certification is wholly voluntary, certification helps ensure the safety and protection of the public so the government needn't become involved.

What's more, earning certification demonstrates an individual's commitment to education and training – a commitment that can be appreciated by potential employers, customers, builders, local officials, manufacturers and the entire hearth industry.

"NFI certification helps your business be more successful. It reaffirms your knowledge of installation and service of the products you work with, both wood and gas," Hill adds.

He wants customers to know his business is a professional establishment that is dedicated to education and training. As his installers acquire the appropriate experience, he encourages them to become NFI certified.

When installers demonstrate their competency by passing an industry exam, the business gains credibility. At the same time, customers feel more comfortable knowing a certified individual is installing highly technical products in their homes. Building code officials, also work more effectively with certified individuals and businesses.

Hill understands those in the industry who say they don't have the time or money for

## NFI Certification Courses

Each year, MidStates HPBA holds NFI certification courses in the MidStates region, allowing those who are too busy at EXPO – or who wish to certify new or multiple installers – the opportunity to certify later in the year and at a reduced rate. (MSHPBA members receive a substantial discount) Following are the dates and locations of upcoming review classes and examinations sponsored by MSHPBA.

- **NFI Woodburning Review and Testing**  
Ann Arbor, MI  
June 23, 2005
- **NFI Gas Review and Testing**  
Ann Arbor, MI  
June 24, 2005
- **NFI Woodburning Review and Testing**  
Cleveland, OH  
August 11, 2005
- **NFI Gas Review and Testing**  
Cleveland, OH  
August 12, 2005

For more information or to register, call the MSHPBA office at (636) 449-5075. You also may print a registration form online at [www.midstateshpba.org](http://www.midstateshpba.org). Each review course and exam has a deadline for registering three weeks prior.



16020 Swingley Ridge Road, Suite 300  
Chesterfield, MO 63017  
[www.midstateshpba.org](http://www.midstateshpba.org)

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HPBA's  
Members  
in Kentucky,  
Michigan,  
Ohio &  
West Virginia

(continued on page 6)



**Cherie Clark-Radovic, President**

By looking at the calendar and gazing at the flowers and trees in bloom outside my window, it is a sure sign that spring has finally arrived in our affiliate states. Just think, at this point in time, many of us have already attended the 2005 HPBA Expo in Atlanta...and what a great show and opportunity it was for all

of us to see new products, glean different approaches to our respective businesses and to network with old friends and associates.

Speaking of networking...I hope those of you who attended the Expo took the time to join your fellow MSHPBA members and board at our luncheon in the convention center. We had a great turnout...the food was good...and it gave the attendees an opportunity to meet two of the people representing the EPA.

Which brings me to an exciting opportunity that is going to take place right in our own affiliate "backyard." As you may have heard, Dayton, OH has been selected as the location for one of the EPA and HPBA's "Great Stove Change outs." This is both an honor and exciting chance for our fellow members in that area to participate in an event that stands to benefit all of those who participate, as well as the neighborhoods in which homeowners become involved in this effort. Be sure to read more about this important and exciting event in this edition of the Fireside Newsletter. Also, watch for further details as we get closer to the program launch date. A special thank you to John Crouch and his team members who have worked diligently on our behalf to have this event happen within our affiliate.

Two other key events that are taking place this summer and sponsored by your affiliate are the NFI Certification programs. The first class on June 23-24 in Ann Arbor, MI offers participants the chance to gain certification in gas and wood. Then, August 11-12, gas and wood certification will be held in Cleveland, OH. Since more and more emphasis is going to be placed on retailers who have certified installers, won't you take some time and give consideration to having your installation crew attend one of these sessions and become certified? Remember...training is not only vital to the growth of your employees, but to the success of your businesses as well.

And on a final note...we have worked to encourage promotional partners of our affiliate to help support our various undertakings such as our Expo luncheon, the NFI Training Courses, as well as our newsletter. So please pay attention to those Partners whose names and products will be appearing in our newsletters...thank them for their support...and give them consideration when looking for manufacturers and distributors with whom you choose to conduct your business.

Best wishes to all of you for a great spring and summer selling season. 🔥

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*(Term expiration year in parentheses)*

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*Fireside Update is published for members of the MSHPBA.*

*Submission of articles is encouraged and welcome.*

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*"The HEARTH Handbooks are a must for all hearth professionals. From proper installation techniques to a quick reference for the codes, these handbooks are the hearth professional's best friend."*

*— Nate Hindemith, Woodstoves & Fireplaces Unlimited, Inc.*

The HEARTH Education Foundation has developed two comprehensive and convenient handbooks on all major hearth appliances and their venting systems.

These two handbooks, Gas Hearth Systems and Solid Fuel Hearth Systems, will help you reference the codes related to all major hearth appliances and their venting systems.

The *Handbooks* are time-saving guidebooks that every hearth professional and building official should have and use. You may even want to give a copy to your local code official.

Both handbooks organize and clarify the world of hearth products - with helpful references to the sometimes difficult to find relevant sections of the major codes:

- Convenient source for clear, organized information on all major factory produced hearth appliances – fireplaces, fireplace inserts, freestanding stoves, gas logs-and their venting systems
- Time saving quick reference charts to easily find relevant codes
- Useful guide to variations in manufacturers' installation instructions
- Numerous illustrations, tables and flow charts

Fill out the order form at right and mail along with your payment to: MSHPBA, 16020 Swingley Ridge Road, Suite 300, Chesterfield, MO 63017. For charge orders, complete this order form and fax to 636.449-5051. For more information, call 636-449-5075. Shipping is included in prices listed.

**Hearth Handbooks for Building Officials 2005**

*\*These rates available only to current members.*

Item	Member	Qty.	Total \$
Gas Hearth Systems	\$50		
Solid Fuel Hearth Systems	\$50		
Both Handbooks	\$90		
TOTAL .....			\$

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 Company \_\_\_\_\_  
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 City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
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# RETAILERS: Get Fired up for National Barbecue Month

## It's time to celebrate National Barbecue Month!

From May 1 to May 31, savvy retailers will take advantage of this annual celebration in order to drive store traffic prior to the Memorial Day holiday, which some consider to be the "official" start of barbecue season. In fact, more than 60 percent of gas grill owners and 52 percent of all grill owners now cook outdoors year 'round!

According to a 2004 consumer survey conducted by the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (HPBA), new grill sales are headed to the 15 million mark this year. Total revenue from grills, equipment and related accessories is projected to be more than \$3 billion – yes, with a "b"!



- Hold a "Master of the Grill" contest for consumers. Invite local chefs to be the taste judges, as well as your newspaper food editor. Ask the paper to publicize the event (before and after); call local TV stations and ask them to cover the event too.

Retailers won't be alone in their efforts. To promote NBM, HPBA is planning multi-media support. Phone interviews with magazines and major market newspapers are underway. Suburban newspapers also will be running NBM stories. Nationally syndicated radio shows and TV producers are being notified about the celebration as well.

Get ready for NBM now! 🔥

National Barbecue Month (NBM) is the perfect way to capitalize on this consumer spending spree:

- Visit <http://hpba.org/bbq> to download the new NBM logo; use it for banners, flyers, ads, point-of-sale materials, etc. Also download HPBA's new Guide to Grill Buying and Tips for Safe Barbecuing fact sheets; copy on colorful paper and hand out to store visitors.
- Schedule a once-a-week barbecuing class for the public; call the food editor of your local newspaper and ask him/her to urge readers to call the store to sign up. Get a local chef or barbecue expert from your area to teach the class. Invite the food editor to participate, or to cover the event for the newspaper. Call local TV stations and ask them to cover the event too.
- Hold a sweepstakes with a grill awarded at the end of May.
- Conduct a sweepstakes to award a free backyard bash; could be for a graduation party, birthday, a house warming, etc.
- Invite a barbecue cookbook author to hold a book signing.
- Create eye-catching displays using barbecue equipment as gifts for spring occasions: wedding showers, Father's Day, birthdays.
- Coordinate a weekend cooking demonstration outside your store to attract attention; create signage stating "Start the season out right with a new grill."
- Hang a large "Celebrate National Barbecue Month" banner on the front of your store.

## Why Certify? (continued from page 1)

certification. "The real problem is procrastination. We are all very busy. We know it is important, but we put it off. Until it is a requirement, some people won't become certified, but leading-edge retailers know that the investment of time and money will be repaid many times over."

Managing a certified staff has additional benefits outside the realm of safety, including making and saving money. Certification can be used as a selling point. Companies that tout their certification status in advertising, on business cards and Web site and in press releases get a leg up on non-certified competition.

Besides contributing to profitability, certification can also save money. For example, if installation and service are 25 percent or less of the gross of a business, insurance premiums may be reduced.

Employers should note that certification helps attract and retain good employees. Studies conducted by the National Organization for Competency Assurance indicate certified individuals stay at their jobs longer and are more productive than non-certified individuals.

NFI certification increases profitability for hearth products businesses, gives installers more self-confidence, enhances the reputation of companies and individuals and improves industry standards. What more reason do you need to become certified? 🔥

# HPBA Board Report



**Pete Anderson**  
Region IV Director

EXPO 2005 in Atlanta set a new record for attendance and exhibitors with over 12,000 hearth, patio and barbeque professionals in attendance. EXPO this year hosted over 45 air quality officials from the US and Canada representing the U.S. EPA, state, provincial and tribal agencies. There was a huge spirit of cooperation as we move toward increased government support of wood stove change out programs as an effective tool to reduce particulate matter from our air.

The HPBA national offices will be moving this summer to a new address, 1901 N. Moore Street, in Arlington. The owner of the building we are currently in plans to raze and rebuild in the next few years.

The Installing Distributors Caucus will be holding an executive conference October 6-8 in New Orleans, please contact Don Kaiser at HPBA for details.

The major buzz at the national level is all about change out

programs. There is significant support for change out programs from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This summer we will be part of two new pilot programs in Dayton, Ohio and Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. I trust many of you have read the recent article in Heath & Home magazine about the current pollution environment in Libby, Montana. If you missed the article I would strongly recommend that you dig up a copy and read this. HPBA is currently soliciting funding from members, manufacturers and the federal government to implement a total wood stove change out for Libby to be completed in two years. This would provide some significant relief from the intense levels of pollution that the people in this area are currently submitted to each day. This also will serve as a demonstration of the effectiveness of change out programs to government officials and others. The long term impact on our industry could be significant. One avenue for financial support of change out programs is that a company found in violation of pollution laws by the EPA, as part of a settlement agreement, agrees to fund a change out program. A modest program in Washington State has been funded in this manner already.

The HPBA Board will be meeting next, June 22nd in Salt Lake City. Please feel free to contact me with your comments or concerns of matters before the national organization. 🔥

## Scenes from the MSHPBA EXPO luncheon at the Georgia World Congress Center

For more information on the successful membership event visit our Web site [www.midstateshpba.org](http://www.midstateshpba.org).



## No Customer Left Behind!

## 3 Ways to Guarantee Your Service Gets a Passing Grade!



Anne M. Obarski

Have you ever been a lost customer? I mean a "real customer" who was left behind, left alone, feeling like you were taken for granted? Sometimes it's a subtle feeling and other times it's like a slap in the face.

Well, I'm still feeling the bruises of my last brush with being left behind. It happened last week when I was rushing to make a very early morning flight. As usual, everything was going wrong, from hitting the alarm one too many times to not packing the night before like I should have to racing to the airport at 5 a.m. in the pouring rain.

And did I mention, NO COFFEE!

I parked the car, ran into the airport with my carry on bag barely touching the wheels to the ground, up the escalator around the bend scanning the signs for my airlines. Now, I must tell you that this is an airline I rarely fly and the reservations were made by the client. I finally spied the counter and then stopped in my tracks. There had to be 75 people in line! Who would have guessed that many people on a rainy, Thursday morning would be on the same flight.

I looked at all of their "happy faces" as I took my place at the end of the line. I glanced up at the monitor to happily see that the flight was going to take off a half hour late! Ahh, there is a God!

I have now been up since 3 a.m. and the anticipation of a 4 hour flight ahead of me and I am already breathing hard when what to my wondering ears I hear, the voice of the airline employee yelling at the top of his voice, "Next time you fly this flight you better get here extra early as there is ALWAYS a long line."

I remember the silence of this primarily business crowd. I guess we were all a little bleary eyed to realize we were being spoken to like little children. I wonder what his point really was. Did he feel sorry for his fellow employee who was the "only" person checking all of these people's bags or was he using reverse psychology on us so that we wouldn't start complaining to him!

Either way, what flashed in huge letters across my mind was, "Buddy, there's not going to BE a next time!"

Little did I realize the day would get longer! We boarded the plane with no problem and pushed back from the gate and I thought, whew, we are on our way. Then the captain came on the intercom and informed us that this "new computer system" was telling him that one of the engines was not working right and we would have to re-boot the computer to see if that would fix the problem. Well, an hour later, as I watched the rain dribbling down the little airplane window we took off on our 4 hour flight which was now a very long 5 hour flight.

When you fly a lot on business, this kind of stuff just becomes

an annoyance that many of us have learned we must put up with. But why? Why do we have to accept bad service? I think it is because sometimes, things do work like clockwork, exactly the way they should and we put those bad times in the back of our minds.

I believe we all have little "report cards" in our brains that give companies a grade each time we deal with them and sometimes we have lots of grades on the report card based on the number of employees we come in contact with for a business.

I will say that the man that yelled at the group of us standing in the line got an "F" for his actions but the overworked gal at the ticket counter got a "B" for being very nice even though she could probably choke her boss for not scheduling more people! The flight attendant seemed like she got up on the wrong side of the bed so I would give her a "C". The pilot, well he did his best, he even got us there on time, after all of that hassle, but there was no gate available so we were stuck again, waiting on the tarmac, he got an A-.

So the total grade for the airline for the whole experience was a C+.

You see everyone your customer comes in contact with, whether in person or on the phone, affects the total perception your customer has toward your business. You may have a wonderful sales staff, but if the receptionist is rude to everyone who calls, the customers make an assumption that the whole company is that way.

*(continued on page 5)*

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## No Customer Left Behind! *(continued from page 4)*

So how do you guarantee a passing grade with your customers? How do you plan on making sure no customer gets left behind? I believe that the following acronyms will help you to stay at the head of the class!

### 1. MMFI-AM

I heard it said somewhere that customers listen to this pretend radio station in their head – MAKE ME FEEL IMPORTANT ABOUT ME! I know it was my fault that I was late to the airport. I hope I learned my lesson. But yelling at the customer doesn't help anyone. I will choose to do business with people who make me feel important. I read a quote that said the following, "People do things for their reasons, not yours." So why do people want to do business with you? Do you go the extra mile? Do you make them feel like they are your only client? Do you under promise and over deliver?

### 2. KISS

This is an old advertising term I taught in my college advertising class that stood for "Keep It Simple, Stupid". Giving good customer service is not rocket science as they say. Give customers your full attention and give them what they want, when they want it, and the way they want it, everyday. Now I know you are saying, but some of my customers will abuse us. Yes, you are right. I just read that Best Buy calls them "devil customers" and "angel customers". How many of each do you have?

Your "kiss" goal is not to make it difficult for your customers to do business with you. Period.

### 3. HAND and CARE:

I have never really liked that word HAND- Have A Nice Day, unless it is said with sincerity and it does not sound like you are a parrot and say that to everyone in line. K-Mart used the "CARE" word on their badges for awhile as it represented: Customers Are Really Everything. Once you realize that, you won't need the words to jog your memory.

In summary, make the customer feel special without wasting their time and build the relationship that will make them feel you care so much about them that they would never think of going elsewhere.

Before you know it, you'll be on their "honor roll"! 🔥

