



ABPA EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Ron Chapman, Chair

The External Affairs Committee has three primary functions: (1) Identify all other organizations involved in the backflow prevention industry; (2) Identify common interests and goals with other organizations; (3) Explore possibilities of joint ventures with these organizations to further the cause of backflow prevention through educational and technical assistance. The function of External Affairs seems simple enough, but in fact can and does become very complicated. Even for those contacts that don't result in the way we would hope, ABPA will continue to work towards developing a working relationship and seek out their expertise.

The ABPA has been aggressive in pursuing these functions over the past few years. ABPA believes that this is a vital part of our organization, because of who we are as an association and the broad base of our membership. The ABPA is the expert in Backflow Prevention within the industry. A bold statement, yes, but one I think we can make because of who makes up the body of ABPA. Experts from all the different disciplines of the industry are the elected members of our Chapters and National Board of Directors. Dedicated industry professionals work on our committees and are the active members working within the industry. It is due to our continuous pursuit, seeking out and bringing to our table, experts from every facet of the industry, that we can say the ABPA is the expert in Backflow Prevention.

Overall, the ABPA has been very successful in achieving our goals and signing Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with many organizations over the years. Some of these MOUs have not produced the results we were originally seeking because of timing and missed opportunities, including ABPA's or a partnered organization's failure to act when genuine opportunities were presented.

As chairman of this committee, I have reported before that it can take months and even years to make ABPA a 'go to' resource for other organizations. As the years pass and ABPA presence is recognized as a creditable resource of expertise in the industry, it becomes easier for ABPA to participate on committees and co-produce educational material. ABPA must seek the benefits of these projects and produce badly needed material for the public. With every MOU signing, new doors are open for the ABPA to walk through, bringing multiple opportunities for ABPA to accomplish our mission statement of Safe Drinking Water.

During the past six months the External Affairs Committee sought out organizations within the water regulatory and health agencies, codes, standards writing groups, as well as the engineering communities. One such organization was the Association of

Safe Drinking Water Administrators (ASDWA) where John Oakeson, Shane Dillard and I had a conference call with Mr. James Taft, Executive director of ASDWA. We discussed the possibility of an MOU and that ABPA is very interested in working with ASDWA in any manner that would permit an exchange of information. Mr. Taft stated that while ASDWA did not sign MOUs with any outside organization. Mr. Taft felt that we could do something else that would provide us with the same level of recognition and cooperation. A letter was shortly sent to ABPA from ASDWA stating their intent to work with ABPA and to share information concerning backflow prevention. ABPA followed up with a similar letter.

Earlier this year I received an email from Jay Peters, Executive Director of Plumbing and Mechanical Activities, ICC. Mr. Peters and I arranged for some phone calls and discussed future roles that each of our organizations could offer. Our phone conversations led to sending Mr. Peters a proposed MOU (half page) for his review. In a few days, I received ICC's proposed MOU (3 pages), that included everything in our initial MOU, plus the meat that I wanted in the body of all our MOUs. I sent this off to the ABPA Executive Committee and was given the go ahead to prepare a final copy (2 ½ pages).

For the face-to-face meeting and formal signing of the MOU, I attended the ICC Code Forum in February 2008. I was graciously welcomed with enthusiasm and had hours of discussions with Lee Clifton, Director of Plumbing Programs. Our first talks lasted for almost five hours, from late afternoon through dinner. Lee showed me around, introduced me to many of ICC key people and I was able to review their extensive publications. The following day, Lee and I met once again and outlined possible projects and joint publications. That evening, I was invited to their Appreciation Reception where the ABPA was introduced to their leadership and code committee members. I was given a few minutes to speak and thank everyone for their hospitality and our future collaborations. The evening ended with the signing of the MOU and photographs.

ICC was invited to attend the ABPA Annual National Conference this May for the final signature to be applied to the MOU from ABPA President John Oakeson prior to the National Board of Directors meeting. (See photos and article "ICC signs MOU with ABPA elsewhere in this issue.") During our annual conference in Indianapolis,

Indiana the ABPA members and leadership was able to extend the same level of enthusiasm and hospitality that Jay Peters and Lee Clifton extended to ABPA.