

ShopTalk

Plant Operations Support Consortium

Volume 15, Number 4

Winter 2011

Opening the Consortium Time Capsule 2011

By Phil Partington, Consortium staff

January 2011 marked the 15-year anniversary of the Plant Operations Support Consortium, an impressive accomplishment by any measure, but especially considering the many changes that have occurred in the last 15 years. Between 1996 and now, cassette tapes have become much less prevalent, the typical home computer no longer weighs the same as a medium-sized dog, telephones can now fit in pockets, there are cameras that don't require film, and now Arnold Schwarzenegger has served as a governor.

Yet, 1996 – the year the Consortium first started operations – was a significant year. The infamous O.J. Simpson trial was finally over, cleanup work had begun after the tragic Oklahoma City bombing, and a new technology called the “DVD” had just premiered. And while the hit movie *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* starring Schwarzenegger claimed that the world would end in 1995 ... it hadn't.

It is also interesting to note

that the first four issues of *Shop Talk* (Summer 1996 to Spring 1997) featured articles on the importance of using the internet, while providing tips on how to use “search engines.” *We've come a long way, baby!*

Consortium Members Speak Out

Shop Talk recently asked three Consortium members to reflect on the last 15 years.

Steve Szablya

In 1996, Steve Szablya, now director of maintenance and operations at Seattle University, was working at Gargoyle, Inc. (Incidentally, that company made the sunglasses worn by Arnold Schwarzenegger in *The Terminator*.) Steve was the director of operations and manufacturing, which included the operations of facilities in two western and two east-coast states.

Shop Talk: How has technology affected how you manage facilities?

Steve: A lot, and not a lot. For

See **Capsule** on page 5



In 1997, then Washington State Governor Gary Locke signed the program into law (in the top photo, that's Bob MacKenzie second from the right).

In 2010, Governor Chris Gregoire signed legislation into law that merged the Consortium with the WSU Extension Energy Program (Bob is third from the left).

ShopTalk



Washington State University
Extension Energy Program
Plant Operations Support
Consortium

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In This Issue:

Opening the Consortium Time Capsule – 2011	1
Shop Notes.....	2
Members Acquire Mini Storage Bins for Mega Savings.....	3
EFC Conference 2011 – A Top-Flight Training Event	4
Fifteen Years of Change in the Custodial Industry (Part One)...	7
Consortium Members.....	8

Shop Talk is a quarterly electronic newsletter of the Plant Operations Support Consortium, providing information focused on facility operations. We welcome feedback from readers. To provide feedback or to subscribe to the Consortium electronic mailing list, email us at PlantOps@energy.wsu.edu.

Archived issues of *Shop Talk* are available at:
www.energy.wsu.edu/PublicFacilitiesSupport/PlantOperations/ShopTalk.aspx

Consortium contacts:
Bob MacKenzie (360) 956-2055
bobmac@energy.wsu.edu
Phil Partington (360) 956-2057
phil@energy.wsu.edu

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Shop Notes

By Bob MacKenzie,
Consortium Manager

15-year Anniversary – A Time for Reflection

For 15 years we have been working together to serve our respective stakeholders. 15 years! Would you have imagined that the Consortium could withstand the rigors of budget cuts, political processes and the vagaries of multiple administrations... yet emerge stronger and more robust in 2011? It is both humbling and exciting.

We commissioned the program in January 1996, ostensibly to create an association of sorts that would strive to avoid reinventing the wheel, share best practices and serve as a clearinghouse – all while remaining financially self-sustaining. The idea caught on and more public agencies of varied stripes (even in Canada, Alaska and surrounding states) joined the Consortium family efforts. After our successful pilot phase, Washington State Governor Gary Locke signed the program into law in April 1997. In 2010 Governor Chris Gregoire signed amped-up legislation into law that breathes even more vigor into Consortium offerings as a critical player in the vaunted WSU Extension Energy program.

In the past 15 years, your Consortium has captured one international, nine national and five state-level awards for excellence, innovation and customer service. During that time, Consortium staff received



Bob MacKenzie

more than 24,000 requests for assistance, logged more than four million road miles and saved members more than \$62 million. We remain operationally-focused, with “boots muddy,” fixing problems, and linking needs with solutions.

Davy Crockett said, “Be sure you’re right, then go ahead,” and your Consortium staff members have dutifully “crossed the T’s and dotted the I’s” on behalf of our members. Not one member has received a single audit finding related to Consortium counsel or events in the past 15 years! The Consortium has handled warehouse-loads of surplus and diverted construction waste from landfills more times than we can count. All of these successes were a direct result of the collaboration by Consortium members and staff – those of you who think “out-of-the-box” and strive to make a positive difference for our stakeholders.

The next 15 years are full of promise for your Consortium. Program offerings have expanded, even as collaborative efforts have become the norm and members seek new ways of doing business.

See **Notes** on page 3

Members Acquire Mini Storage Bins for Mega Savings

By Phil Partington, Consortium staff

Consortium staff members have been lauded for their ability to resolve complex problems by boiling components down to easily digestible properties. Sometimes a solution can involve many moving parts at the same time, but the cooperation of members can make great things happen. Such a scenario occurred last fall when hundreds of mini storage bins and racking became available, thanks to a private partner. The bins had been intended for use as containers for scrapbooking materials. Each bin was worth about \$2, but the real value was in the racking, which in some cases cost hundreds of dollars if purchased new.

Availability of the bins was announced to the Consortium, and Oak Harbor School District was one of the first to respond. The school district requested a pallet of the bins to be used to store tools, nuts and bolts, screws, nails, etc. They also asked for assistance in transporting the items, as the items were in a warehouse in Fife, Washington, about 2-1/2 hours south of Oak Harbor.

Meanwhile, the Washington State Soldier's Home in Retsil, Washington, was in need of several residential refrigerators, and Oak Harbor School District

had just designated some as surplus. Via the Consortium, the school district offered the refrigerators to the Soldier's Home, and Consortium staff arranged for the Soldier's Home to pick up the storage bins in Fife on their way to Oak Harbor – a win-win for both organizations. This is but one example of making reuse costs effective, and both member organizations are to be commended.

"My staff loves the bins," said Bill Armbrust, Director of Maintenance and Grounds at Oak Harbor School District. "It was of great help to have the Soldier's Home bring them to us. We're thrilled whenever we can take advantage of these kinds of opportunities through the Consortium."

If that weren't enough, a member in British Columbia was also among the first to respond to announcements of the availability of the bins. Delta School District #37 is south of Vancouver, B.C., and also wasn't able to make a five-hour journey to Fife to pick them up. So the Soldier's Home delivered an extra pallet to Oak Harbor School District, where it



Several members were able to obtain mini storage bins.

could be stored for a week or so until Delta staff could make the much shorter trip.

"This worked out wonderfully for us," said John Vantol, Manager of Maintenance Services with Delta School District. "It's amazing how the Plant Ops Consortium can take a convoluted scenario and make everything flow so seamlessly."

Numerous other members were also able to take advantage of this opportunity, including Lime Kiln State Park, Bethel School District, the Department of Social and Health Services and the Washington Department of Transportation. Willapa Valley School District was even able to get a free pallet jack from the warehouse offering the bins.

"This was a great find for the district and we have already put it to

See **Storage Bins** on page 4

Storage Bins

Continued from page 3

good use," said Bob Archer, Head of Maintenance and Grounds at Willapa Valley School District. "Thanks to the Consortium, our district has saved approximately \$300-500 with the acquisition of this pallet jack."

This entire effort took teamwork, a lot of cooperation and some savvy planning, and is the sort of multifaceted problem-solving and facilitation useful for Consortium members. The results make the very difficult (and sometimes nearly impossible) not only possible, but doable. In a tight economy, more members are pushing the limits on what the Consortium is able to accomplish, and that's a good thing.

"Members sometimes tell us they don't want to bother us



Bob Archer, head of Maintenance and Grounds at Willapa Valley School District, saved \$300-500 by obtaining a free pallet jack.

with a certain request, because we're 'already so busy,'" said Bob MacKenzie, Manager of the Plant Operations Support Consortium. "Our response is always the same... 'You wouldn't say that to a busy waiter if you were hungry for steak, would you?' We know our business and how to get things done and our full attention is directed to member needs. Engage your Consortium to the fullest, and together we can make great things happen."

Consortium staff is ready for your queries and requests for assistance. Call (360) 956-2055 or e-mail plantops@energy.wsu.edu. In addition, check the website to view an 18-minute introduction to the Consortium, <http://www.energy.wsu.edu/PublicFacilitiesSupport/PlantOperations/OnlineTrainings.aspx>. ✖

Notes

Continued from page 2

The sour economy has proven that the Consortium is configured for rough waters. We'll navigate them together. It certainly doesn't hurt to be part of a major land-grant university system, and our Extension Energy colleagues are highly supportive of Consortium objectives.

In short, we're at the top of our game and ready to support your operations in 2011 and beyond. Join us at the milestone **Energy/Facilities Connections** conference (see sidebar). Larry, Phil, Sue and I look forward to seeing you. ✖

Bob



EFC Conference 2011 – A Top-Flight Training Event

Join us on May 11-13, 2011, at the *Energy/Facilities Connections* event in Leavenworth, Washington, and come together in a focused environment to share best practices, learn innovative technologies and proven practices, and hear nationally-renowned speakers.

Register online at: <http://www.energy.wsu.edu/efc>. The cost is a mere \$250 for Plant Operations Support Consortium members (enter "member" in the discount code box for the benefit) and \$400 for non-members. Don't forget to also register for the complimentary EFC webinar training, March 2, 2011. Click the button on the right hand side of the EFC website.

Secure your lodging at the Enzian Inn, (800) 223-8511, and receive your discounted government rate by using code 8557. Other nearby hotels are also available at per diem rates. Contact (360) 956-2058 for details. ✖

History

Continued from page 1

instance, I'm convinced that all work order systems are bad. That technology on computers has been around a while, and with the exception of bells, whistles and user interface, I haven't seen any major improvements; most people complain about their limitations. On the other hand, changes to control systems in the last few years have been astounding. Pretty much anything you want can be controlled, measured and programmed from your Blackberry.

Shop Talk: *If you could go back 15 years and give yourself advice on how you manage and plan your facility operations, what would you suggest you do the same and what might you do different?*

Steve: First, I would tell my past self that deferred maintenance is not necessarily a bad thing. It simply reflects the state of your facility. By correlation, if you get a dent in your car, you don't have to fix it. The car will still run. If your management wants to have very nice buildings, you want the deferred maintenance to be low. It's also a good measurement of whether you're keeping up or falling behind. At the end of the day, it is what it is.

Second, installing things for the future is usually expensive, so make sure to have a strategic plan. Throwing in an extra pipe because you *might* need it is not a good idea, unless it has some strategic value.

Third, listen much more than you talk. I often find it challenging to

fight the urge to open my mouth before I hear everyone weigh in on a topic, but you're usually better off if you voice your mind after hearing all sides of an issue. Acknowledge that you don't know everything and that the people around you are the experts. Furthermore, hire people who are smarter than you in the specialty area they are hired for.

Shop Talk: *What are some significant successes that developed by partnership with the Consortium?*

Steve: Networking with other colleges at the grass roots level has helped us talk to our peers about common problems and the resulting solutions. Getting to know our vendor partners in educational environments hosted and suggested by the Consortium has also been beneficial. A recent training event that was partnered with the Consortium, APPA and our vendors is a great example of that.

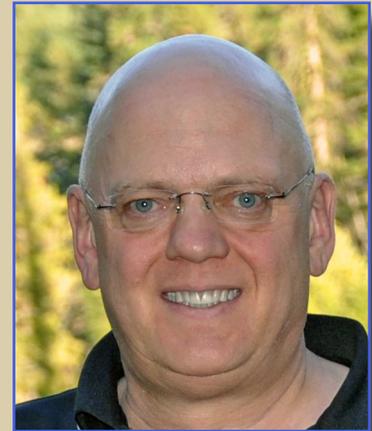
Edwin Valbert

In 1996, Edwin Valbert, capital asset manager at the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), was managing capital construction projects around the state at DSHS facilities such as Rainier School in Buckley and Western State Hospital in Lakewood.

Shop Talk: *How has technology affected how you manage facilities?*

Edwin: Improvements to fire alarm systems, HVAC controls, the use of web-based systems to monitor buildings and building systems are some examples where technology improved. However, I also believe that technology has

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Installing things for the future is usually expensive, so make sure you have a strategic plan.

Steve Szablya,
Director of Maintenance
and Operations,
Seattle University

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been a double-edged sword over the years. On one hand, it should and does allow us to do things more efficiently, but on the other hand, that can be used as an excuse to reduce warm bodies in maintenance departments.

Shop Talk: *If you could go back 15 years and give yourself advice on how you manage and plan your facility operations, what would you suggest you do the same and what might you do different?*

See **History** on page 6

History

Continued from page 5

Edwin: I would work towards having more central control of DSHS buildings. I understand that this could be seen as burdensome to day-to-day operations in individual facilities, but I think central oversight and acting as a soundboard or review board regarding building operation and maintenance can prove beneficial.

Shop Talk: *What are some significant successes that developed by partnership with the Consortium?*

Edwin: I can say without a doubt

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I can say without a doubt that DSHS facilities statewide have benefited enormously from being part of the Consortium.

Edwin Valbert
Capital Asset Manager,
Washington State Department of
Social and Health Services

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that DSHS facilities statewide have benefited enormously from being part of the Consortium. DSHS has acquired equipment and materials that have helped keep facilities operating and reduced costs. We have benefited from technical assistance with issues that were not familiar to us. We also shared in and have grown from the exchange of information that takes place between all members. As DSHS facilities are closed and reduced in size over the coming years, there will be fewer resources within DSHS to call on. Therefore, leaning on the Consortium could become even more critical.

Dick Moore

Dick Moore, primary plant manager for Airway Heights Corrections Center near Spokane, spent 1996 as the plant manager at Pine Lodge Pre-Release. At that time, Pine Lodge was a co-ed minimum-security facility of around 400 inmates, a much smaller facility than Airway Heights.

Shop Talk: *How has technology affected how you manage facilities?*

Dick: The facilities management arena has become even more complex because of competing needs of staff, tenants and efficiencies brought about by automation and environmental concerns.

Shop Talk: *If you could go back 15 years and give yourself advice on how you manage and plan your facility operations, what would you suggest you do the same and what might you do different?*

Dick: I would make maximum

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We'd like our staff to tap into the energy resources brought about by the merging of the WSU and Consortium powerhouses.

Dick Moore
Primary Plant Manager,
Airway Heights
Corrections Center, Spokane

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use of the Consortium's educational and certification outlets to ensure a broad based and well-grounded facilities background.

Shop Talk: *What are ways you'd like to see your organization take further advantage of the Consortium in the next five years?*

Dick: We'd like our staff to tap into the energy resources brought about by the merging of the WSU and Consortium powerhouses. ✖

Check out more of our Consortium history at our website.

Fifteen Years of Change in the Custodial Industry (Part One)

By Sue Brown, Consortium staff

The past 15 years have brought many positive changes in the janitorial industry. More organizations seem to be placing more value into their custodial programs as the nation places more emphasis on human and environmental health. The Consortium continues its mission to stay on the cutting edge of technological advancements and best practices in the industry. The Consortium has partnered with Gene Woodard (director of Custodial Services at the University of Washington) for several years to bring opportunities such as the Custodial Connections training (a component of the *Energy/Facilities Connections* conference).

"The cleaning industry has changed significantly over the last 15 years, which allows for improvements in how effectively and efficiently we can clean our



Gene Woodard

buildings," said Woodard. "If we don't stay current with new innovations and technological changes, we'll be left behind."

The Value of Custodians

In 1996, one could become a janitor without much experience. That is how it had been for a hundred years. While in the United States janitors are still considered entry-level employees who require little or no formal training, European countries seem to put more stock in the profession. It is common for some European janitors to enter the profession on an apprentice level in order to gain experience. It should therefore come as no surprise that those custodians are considered as professional level employees. The philosophy toward the janitorial industry and its importance is gradually changing in the United States as more organizations regard the work custodians do as important components of building maintenance.

Changes in the Cleaning Process

In the 1990s, most custodial programs took the approach that facilities needed to first and foremost "look" clean. The 1992 APPA (www.appa.org/) standards for "desired appearance" were applied as guidelines for universities and colleges, with appearance levels ranging from Level 1 – Orderly Spotlessness to Level 5 – Unkempt Neglect.

In the past decade, the definition of "clean" has evolved, fueled by many health concerns in buildings associated with human-to-human contamination. The operational word today is "*Cleaning for Health*," and that underlies new methods of cleaning. The removal of microscopic germs and viruses in the workplace is being taken more seriously to ensure that environments are cleaned not only for appearance, but more importantly for the health of building occupants. When custodial departments design their cleaning program to clean for health and not just appearances, a strong line of defense against the transmission of contagious diseases is established and the cleaning chemicals introduced into the indoor environment have no harmful effects and are the safest available, usually with a third-party certification such as Green Seal. Dust and soil are being systematically removed from the indoor air environment. These factors contribute to the health and well-being of everyone using the building.

Changes have taken place in the industry due to stricter regulations and research pertaining to how cleaning is performed. In the last 15 years software programs have been developed for managing custodial time and quality control/inspection, allowing

See **Change** on page 8

Change

Continued from page 7

custodial operations to become more efficient and to have data about all elements of their operation. This provides the department with facts and data to justify budgeting and staffing levels.

Many organizations are now using a team-cleaning approach to make use of worker specialization and improve efficiencies. This reduces the level of boredom that workers may have had from working alone in their areas, doing the same job in the same way year after year. Now workers collaborate with each other to get the job done. In doing so, they often realize variety and simplification in their work.



Sue Brown explains "cleaning for health."

Likewise, many organizations are re-examining their staff work schedules and making adjustments. Cleaning when facilities are empty has always been seen as the most logical time to clean. Organizations are now finding that workers can integrate into daytime hours when buildings are occupied. This is a win-win situation, allowing building

occupants to "see" the cleaning staff working and enabling staff to get to know the building occupants. This "see and be seen" philosophy is empowering. Custodians on day shifts are building pride into their jobs as they are recognized for the jobs they do. The cost benefits are that night time energy use is reduced in the building and it is a safer situation for the worker. ✖

Contact Gene Woodard, (206) 543-7831, or e-mail gwoodard@u.washington.edu for more information about UW Custodial Services.
Contact Sue Brown, (360) 956-2058, or e-mail browns@energy.wsu.edu to find out how the Consortium can assist with your custodial needs.

Watch for Part Two of this article in the Spring 2011 issue of *Shop Talk*.

Consortium Members

K-12 Schools

Bridgeport
Camas
Centralia
Chehalis
Chilliwack, BC
Colville
Coquitlam, BC
Delta, BC
Easton
Eatonville
Enumclaw
ESD 101
ESD 114
ESD 121
Federal Way
Highline
Hoquiam
Inchelium
Ketchikan Gateway
Borough, AK
LaCrosse
Liberty
Lyle
Marysville
McCleary
Medical Lake
Mission, BC
Moses Lake
Mukilteo
Nine Mile Falls

Oak Harbor
Ocosta
Okanagan Skaha, BC
Olympia
Orcas Island
Orondo
Peninsula
Port Angeles
Port Townsend
Portland, OR
Reardan-Edwall
Renton
Republic
Saanich, BC
San Juan Island
Selah
Selkirk
Shoreline
Snohomish
South Kitsap
Sunrise Beach
Surrey, BC
Thorp
Wenatchee
White River
Wilbur
Wishkah Valley
Yakima

Universities/Colleges

Big Bend Community
College
Clark College
Community Colleges of
Spokane
Everett Community
College
Grays Harbor College
Highline Community
College
Olympic College
Pierce College
Seattle Central
Community College
Seattle University
South Puget Sound
Community College
The Evergreen State
College
Washington State
University Extension
Energy Program
Wenatchee Valley
College

Municipalities

City of Centralia
City of Hoquiam
City of Kent
City of Longview
City of Olympia

City of Port Townsend
City of Tumwater
City of Vancouver
Clark County
Cowlitz County
Cowlitz County PUD #1
Grays Harbor Public
Development Authority
Jefferson County
King County Department
of Executive Services
Lakehaven Utility
District
Lewis County
Pierce County Library
System
Pierce Transit
Skamania County
Snohomish County
Sound Transit
Tacoma-Pierce County
Health Department
Thurston County
Whatcom County
Yakima County Fire
District No. 5

States/Tribal/Misc.

State of Alaska
Squaxin Island Tribe
Hopelink

Tacoma Convention &
Trade Center

Washington State Agencies

Corrections
Criminal Justice Training
Commission
Ecology
General Administration
Health
Housing Finance
Commission
Licensing
Liquor Control Board
Military
Natural Resources
Parks & Recreation
School for the Blind
School for the Deaf
Social & Health Services
Transportation
Veteran's Affairs
Washington State Patrol

Our warm welcome to new members in **bold blue** type. We look forward to serving your facility and operations needs.