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Education is key for the boom in new-age hydronic technology

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UNFORTUNATELY, hydronic heating has always been a stepchild in our country. Even engineers and architects treat hydronics as a mystery when it comes to new-age hydronic technology.

Hydronics has always been a spin-off of the plumbing trade and keeping up to date with the latest technology has been a catch-as-catch-can affair, with most of the training being done by component manufacturers. With the innovations that are occurring in hydronics, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a complete program that teaches the basics of a modern-day hydronic heating system.

High-tech hydronics are here to stay. If you don't gear up, you are going to miss a huge opportunity.

This revolution in hydronic heating not only affects the traditional areas of this country but hot air areas as well where warm water heating systems are catching on.

The only impediment is education.

Rule No.1: Forget everything you have learned about baseboard hot water systems and re-educate yourself.

I know how hard it is to run a business with all the everyday problems, making a good profit at the end of the year, and worrying at the same time about the new technology.

But look at it this way: the more you are able to offer high-tech hydronics, the more certain your future will be. You won't worry about do-it-yourself and Home Depots. People will be willing to pay for your know-how; components will be a non-issue.

To become the person or company in demand you have to make a serious commitment to becoming an expert in the latest technology. You must take pride in your knowledge in hydraulics, controls and in your high standard. Floor heating and snow melting are not for the mediocre. The work has to be done right or it will come back to haunt you, your customer, your suppliers and your manufacturer. You, the heating contractor, are the most important link in the chain. You must understand the important role you play in this business.

Rule No.2: Learn and study all available information supplied by reputable systems manufacturers. Spend lots of time in researching tubing technologies, control technologies and hydraulics. Learn the basics about mixing valves. Send your mechanics to school offered by systems manufacturers. There are

a half-dozen very good companies that will provide excellent, in-depth training services. Whatever you will invest in this will pay off in no time.

Above all, the best advice I can give you is to a floor heating system in your own house. After living with the system, you will know exactly how such a system responds to all the variable. You will understand why certain recommendations are made by manufacturers.

I installed a floor heating system in my house 15 years ago and continue to upgrade the system or add new components. This is the only way that you can be sure that the advice I give to homeowners, contractors and wholesalers is correct.

Obviously you can not install every new item that comes on the market, but if you're going to install floor heating systems, then it will be to your advantage to live with one in your own home to increase your knowledge of the floor heating systems you sell.

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