



SUPER!

the monthly newsletter of the Superintendents Technical Association

March Two Thousand Eight Volume Ten, Issue Three

promoting excellence in New York City multi-family apartment building maintenance through education, training and public information

also on the web at www.nycsta.org

1998 - 2008 10th ANNIVERSARY



February 2008 Audience for Moderated Panel Discussion

FEBRUARY'S MEETINGS

In the month of February we had a meeting in our space at Seafarers & International House, 123 E. 15 St., and another in the Bronx at Hostos Community College, 450 Grand Concourse.

We enjoyed a moderated panel discussion with an emphasis on how to become a super.

Each of our five panelists, Bill Aris-tovulos, Curt Bergeest, Peter Roach, Keith Williams, and Roberto Cardona are long-time supers.

Represented by our panel was a Park Avenue co-op super, an East Village super, a UHAB co-op super, an upscale rental super, and more. Each one introduced himself and told us a little about where they work and how they got into the business, then entertained questions from the crowd.

cont'd next page

HISTORY OF STA, PART II

By Dick Koral

In this, STA's tenth anniversary year, I am trying to recollect the main, big steps to its creation, then bring us up-to-date. Hold onto your hat it's quite a ride.

Last month, we mentioned the New York State Energy Office. If you're old enough, you will recollect that there was an "Arab oil embargo" (related to the Israeli-Arab war), that cars were lined up at the gas pumps hoping to get a couple of gallons, and that President Jimmy Carter declared that the struggle for energy efficiency was the moral equivalent of war. So the Congress sent millions of dollars to the states to set up energy offices and lead the good fight. One

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BEST WISHES

We send our best wishes for a quick recovery to long time super, engineer and STA member Norm Saul, who recently experienced some health problems.

Our thoughts and prayers are with you and we hope you get well quickly Norm, and participate with us again real soon.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

STA warmly welcomes all who became brand new first time members recently:

- M. Montoya
- Sarah Rivera
- Dennis Carroll
- Abraham Rodriguez

Thanks for joining us!

Please make yourself at home with us, join us in monthly meetings at every opportunity, and let us know what you want to get from (and what you're willing to put into) your association with STA. We welcome your participation at every level.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Our March meeting will be held at the usual place at Seafarers, but at press time we do not have a presenter and topic nailed down.

Keep checking the website's [CALENDAR](#) page for details as we get them, or call 718-552-1161.

KILOWATT WASTE

When you use unnecessary light and lamp wattage it adds to greenhouse gas emissions. Each kilowatt hour of electricity, whether used during the day or at night, adds nearly two pounds of carbon dioxide (approximately 38 million tons per year) and two grams of sulfur dioxide (which creates acid rain) into the atmosphere. Additionally, the use of unnecessary light at night generated by coal fired plants increases the need for coal and adds to the strip mining of coal, which results in more deforestation, sludge flows, aquifer depletion and groundwater pollution. contributed by Dick Koral



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FEBRUARY'S MEETINGS, cont'd

Before the panel commenced, Peter Roach, who is our Manhattan president, stood and made a few remarks after which he introduced Roberto Cardona, currently STA's president, who also took some time to say a few preliminary words to the group.

After that each panelist took some time to talk personally about their buildings and jobs and how they got into the business.

Roberto told the crowd that he wishes he had the opportunities 30 years ago when he was getting into the business that are available now through STA. The moral support, the education our organization offers, the help in mentoring and answering questions are amazing, and everyone should take full advantage of it, he said.

Another comment from a panelist was that really we should be making more money and getting more respect, and that sometimes we stay in a job too long. It was the opinion of one panelist that seven to eight years in one building is long enough, the implication being that we only grow and stretch ourselves as we move on and out and up, allowing for ourselves the time to experience greater exposure to more and different opportunities.

There were many interesting and pertinent questions from a very attentive audience, and lots of helpful comments about the life of a super and how to be a good one.

One of the first questions coming from the audience was about the resume needed, and we were remind-

cont'd page 3

HISTORY OF STA, PART II concluded

part was aimed at housing.

One day I got a call from Albany. The NYS Energy Office asked me (AHI) to head up teaching multifamily building personnel how to use the energy conservation workbook (and be paid well to do it!) That was one of the biggest steps, because it took us all over the city doing these all-day workshops. We got to be well known and we got to know a lot of people.

One of the workshop sites was in Hispanic Williamsburg ("Los Sures the south side"). Fortunately, I had a secretary who spoke Spanish, so between us, we were all right. The neighborhood housing organization assigned us a vacant corner storefront. We asked the Energy Office for a small budget to create a Los Sures Supers Club and returned every Wednesday from 1-2 p.m. (when the supers were free no garbage collections).

This was another of the big steps I mentioned before. Our experience with the Los Sures Supers Club taught what a supers club could be. Representatives of manufacturers and energy suppliers (I recall, especially, Brooklyn Union Gas and Heat-Timer) delivered first-class lecture-demonstrations. Never mind that our storefront corner was also the drug center of the neighborhood. The druggies never bothered us. The main thing is that the club members came out each week and treasured the "school." Aha! So the way to reach and teach some supers is in the fraternal atmosphere of the club!

In the meanwhile, the City University of New York decided to move the

entire satellite campus of NYC Technical College from Manhattan to downtown Brooklyn and we found ourselves eventually in leased quarters at 250 Jay Street. We were given a grant by LISC-Local Initiatives Support Group to continue our teaching and it was out of one of those classes of managers and supers that a pioneer group of supers founded a new supers club.

They named it the Superintendents Club of New York and elected its first officers. But that's another big step, for next month.

NYC SOLAR SUMMIT 2008

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MANAGEMENT MATTERS IN REDUCING ENERGY USE

Housing that has been renovated for low-income people has been found to be the least energy efficient housing stock, using as much as two times the energy per square foot as the average multifamily building, according to data provided by Andrew Padian of Steve Winter Associates, Inc. With January 2008 setting all-time records for the price of heating oil and gas, affordable housing managers must find ways to reduce fuel use.

Experts in this field agree that most buildings can save on energy use through a combination of building alterations and effective management. "In our experience," Padian suggests, "most buildings waste 40% of their energy through a combination of construction defects and management maintenance choices."⁽¹⁾

Conducting energy retrofits, performing an energy audit and implementing measures such as increasing insulation, improving heating system efficiency and upgrading appliances will more than pay back the costs for most affordable housing in NYC. At the same time, it is important to know that the ongoing actions of management and maintenance staff are as important as the physical renovations. One study, discussed below, illustrates this point.

Eduardo Guerra and Richard Leigh of the Community Environmental Center (www.cecenter.org), examining the results of affordable housing

FEBRUARY'S MEETINGS, cont'd

ed of last month's meeting in which we had the full treatment on resume writing and preparing for the job interview, which has been given each of the last 3 years by Peter Grech.

Further advice from our panel: "Never open a door for a resident unless keys have been provided and permission has been given prior."

"Keep your promises - do what you say you are going to do."

"Good communication with your residents is extremely important."

"Learn all you can about 'green' buildings, they are the up and coming thing."

"Don't be too friendly with your employees, but do everything you can to help and support them - you want them on your side at all times."

"Protect your vendors, be loyal to the good ones - besides, they know where the good jobs are opening up."

The question came up of where can one learn the administrative side of supering. HPD & CityTech were two answers given.

Answers to the question "What is one thing everyone should know to be a super?" were varied:

1. learn heating systems
2. learn proper speaking skills
3. learn how to supervise your staff
4. learn to think three times - speak once, and
5. learn how to troubleshoot each one of your systems

were some of the answers given. We were reminded that supers must, of necessity, be a jack of all trades and master of many.

FAST FACT

contributed by Carlos Henriquez

Workaholic Americans will forfeit about 570 million vacation days in 2006. We wasted 424 million vacation days last year. Source: expedia.com.

Conclusion: Relax, take time to unwind, spend time with friends and family, pursue your hobby, take your vacation time, and come back a better person.

Life is too short to do otherwise.

STA EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Date for the P-99 class preparation for Heavy Oil Certificate of Fitness by FDNY will be

- first night class on March 19 at 6pm
- last class is March 26 also at 6pm.

Members and non-members welcome.

Classroom address is 310 East 46 St, NY NY.

For more details go to NYCSTA.org/staschool.htm or call STA School Director Peter Grech at (212) 370-1052.



Michael Caputo

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MANAGEMENT MATTERS IN REDUCING ENERGY USE, cont'd

energy retrofits which were financed through the Assisted Multifamily Program, the precursor to the New York State Research and Energy Development Authority's (NYSERDA) current Multi-Family Performance Program. In that study, they found that 14 of 15 buildings examined reduced their fuel use by an average of 24% and, those that were fuel heated (as opposed to electric-heated) also reduced electric consumption by 9%. Their presentation of study results cites one building over which management lost control. In that case, the energy management system was flooded and disconnected, the super began manual operation of the boiler and the entryway windows were open for much of the winter. Energy costs were not reduced in that building.(2)

While this one outlier presents an extreme example of management failure, the commitment and know-how of management and maintenance staff can not be underestimated in achieving building performance. Even with-

out elaborate building renovation, most managers can reduce their portfolio's energy costs. Indeed, another study on low-income multifamily buildings conducted by Padian found that management and maintenance are the most important factors in determining building fuel use.(3)

Based on this study, Padian concluded:

- Fuel-use analysis should be the first step of any building investigation.
- High use for heating is typically caused by overheating, and by lack of night set-back controls.
- Practicing regular maintenance on all systems leads to more efficient fuel use.
- Trained management and maintenance staff that watch fuel use closely can reduce energy use.

Fortunately, for managers, there are several opportunities to learn how to manage your portfolio to save energy. NYSERDA is currently registering participants for a three-day class to be held in March and again in July. In

cont'd next page

"The more original a discovery, the more obvious it seems afterwards."

- Arthur Koestler

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nycsta.org/stayintouch.htm

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MANAGEMENT MATTERS IN REDUCING ENERGY USE, concluded

understand how the interacting systems of your building can be tuned to save energy, including: lighting, heat and hot water systems, water saving technologies. Understand how to analyze your fuel bills, improve record keeping and improve health, safety and comfort (and reduce complaints). The class costs \$399 up-front, however, 75% is reimbursable upon completion with a final cost of \$100. Participants are encouraged to pursue Certification from the Building Performance Institute Certification; the class also qualifies for continuing education credits as a Multi-Family Energy Efficient Building Operator.

To register for either the March or July class, download the registration form at www.prattcenter.net/events. Wednesday March 5th 10 am and ongoing first Wednesdays of the month: Managing Lean and Green, a monthly forum for managers of affordable housing sponsored by Pratt Center for Community Development, the Supportive Housing Network of New York and ANHD. Learn and share information about how to improve energy efficiency and make the buildings you manage more environmentally and financially sustainable.

At Pratt Manhattan 144 W. 14th Street, Room 602. To register, download the registration form at www.prattcenter.net/events or contact Rita Mazza Rita.M@ANHD.org.

Guest writer: Wendy Fleischer, Pratt Center for Community Development

Community Environmental Center. 2007. 3. Andrew Padian, Fuel Use In Multifamily Buildings. Home Energy Magazine, 1999. 1. Andrew Padian, Energy Usage: How Efficient are Your Buildings? (or the 7 to 1 solution). Steven Winter Associates, Inc. 2. Eduardo Guerro and

Richard leigh, PE,
Tales from the AMP
Database: Energy Consumption in a selection of New York State Multifamily Buildings.

SUPER QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Question #750:

We have child safety bars installed in our apartment windows and when we requested that they be removed to accommodate an air conditioner we were told they cannot be removed once they are in. We don't have children and we weren't told when we moved in that they couldn't be removed. Is this true? Are there any other options to have them removed?

Answer: Whoever said they cannot be removed once they have been installed, is mistaken. The purpose of child guards are to protect young children. If you no longer have young children, then the guards can be removed. There is no such rule / code / law saying that once they are installed, they stay installed, even though there are no children living in the apartment.

Answer: Yes that's correct, they can be removed, child window guards are installed with one way screws, to avoid removal by the tenant. There are a couple of ways to remove the screws. They sell special one way screw drivers for such screws, or you can use a cold chisel to remove the heads of the screws, remove the child guard and then use vise grip pliers to remove the rest of the screw. Good luck.

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Matthew Arnold, President

Question #648: Does anyone know for sure whether raising or lowering the steam set point during heating will conserve more fuel. For some reason I seem to use less fuel when raising the set point from 5psi to 6.5psi. However I don't know if my readings are that true.

Answer: Steam pressure has very little to do with the cost of heating a building. It is the AMOUNT of steam that the building uses that effects the cost. That being said, it does take less BTU's to produce lower pressure steam than higher, so there is a small savings there. Now, get this, buildings HEAT FASTER and USE LESS STEAM at LOW PRESSURES. Even 5 psig seems high. With the proper piping and equipment, you can get more comfortable and better heating with 3 psig or below!! It is strange but true.

Question #647: What are the requirements and permits needed for a building super?

Answer: See the answers to the same question on the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page and [Supers and Management](#) page.



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SEE YOURSELF PUBLISHED- SUPER! NEEDS CONTRIBU- TORS

SUPER! is at all times looking for articles written by and for building support workers for each issue we publish. Articles such as the one on page five of November's issue by Pennsylvania STA member Bob Schertzer.

If you're an aspiring writer or just like to express yourself with pen and paper, try it out.

Write an article or short story about your work or life and email it to the editor. Don't worry about misspelling words or getting your grammar correct. Let the editors deal with that.

THE MAYONNAISE JAR AND TWO CUPS OF COFFEE

contributed by Keith Williams

When things in your life seem almost too much to handle, when 24 hours in a day are not enough, remember the mayonnaise jar and the 2 cups of coffee.

A professor stood before his philosophy class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, he wordlessly picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

The professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles rolled into the open areas between the golf balls. He then asked the students again if the jar

was full. They agreed it was.

The professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. He asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with an unanimous 'yes.'

The professor then produced two cups of coffee from under the table and poured the entire contents into the jar effectively filling the empty space between the sand.

The students laughed.

'Now,' said the professor as the laughter subsided, 'I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The golf balls are the important things--- your family, your children, your health, your friends and your favorite passions---and if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.

One of The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house and your car.

The sand is everything else---the small stuff. 'If you put the sand into the jar first,' he continued, 'there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls. The same goes for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff you will never have room for the things that are important to you.

'Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Spend time with your children. Spend time with your parents. Visit with grandparents. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your spouse out to dinner. Play another 18. There will always be time to clean the house and fix the disposal. Take care of the golf balls first---

concluded next

FEBRUARY'S MEETINGS, concluded

Another question came about what residents expect from you. The answers to this question are as varied as buildings in New York City and the residents within. Bill reminded us that there are those who seem unhappy 24/7 and who never have anything nice to say to or about building support, but usually have lots of complaints.

These kinds of people have to be taken with a grain of salt - you can remind yourself who and what they are and realize that you do not have to take them as seriously as some others. Then there are those who almost never complain, but when they do it is high time to sit up and listen, because if this type of person is complaining, then something must be very wrong and it's a wake up call to make quick, decisive changes in responsiveness, at the least.

EARTH HOUR

contributed by Dick Koral

When is Earth Hour?

It is on Saturday, March 29th, 2008 between 8 -9 pm.

This is the hour when we are asked to turn off all our lights as a demonstration of our earnestness about global warming.

Let's all participate, first of all by telling others about Earth Hour.

As we approach the date, please also participate by sending out reminders (and explanations) to as many as possible.

John Neos, President



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HOUSING LINKS IN THE NEWS

From Gotham Gazette

Links to web sites, articles or reports that illuminate the most recent housing news.

[Queens Residents Try to Preserve Historic Buildings](#) (AM New York, Feb 26, 2008)

[New York City to Help Doctors Track Patients' Records Electronically](#) (NY Times, Feb 26, 2008)

After two years of planning and a public investment of more than \$60 million, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg said on Monday that New York City was ready to equip doctors with computer software that can track patients' medical records in order to provide better preventive care.

[Manhattan Rent Growth Slows](#) (Crain's, Feb 22, 2008)

[Sale of One Javits Parcel Enough for Affordable Housing Fund](#) (The Real Estate, Feb 22, 2008)

[Homeowner Aid Meeting Set for Saturday](#) (Daily News, Feb 21, 2008)

[Mortgage Counseling at City Churches](#) (Associated Press, Feb 21, 2008)

[Mansion Gets Expensive Title](#) (NY Observer, Feb 20, 2008)

[Bloomberg Threatens To Foreclose on 25,000 Properties](#) (NY Sun, Feb 20, 2008)

[Bronx Landlord Is Jailed for Code Violations](#) (City Room, Feb 20, 2008)

[Manhattan Rents Drop in Doorman Buildings](#) (NY Observer, Feb 19, 2008)

[Gowanus Condo Plan](#) (NY Post, Feb 15, 2008)

[A Co-op for \\$14,000? It's No Fiction](#) (NY Times, Feb 15, 2008)

[Mayor and Council at Odds Over Tenant Voucher Bill](#) (City Limits, Feb 14, 2008)

[Bronx Tenants Hold Rally Against Rent Hike](#) (Associated Press, Feb 14, 2008)

[Modular Home Swings Into Place](#) (Bronx Times, Feb 14, 2008)

[Credit Crunch Squeezes Funds for Affordable Housing](#) (Real Deal, Feb 13, 2008)

[Homeless? Low-Paying Job? Her Mortgage Was Approved](#) (City Room, Feb 13, 2008)

[Is the Mayor's Housing Plan on Track?](#) (City Room, Feb 13, 2008)

[Columbia Buys Site to House Displaced Tenants](#) (The Real Estate, Feb 12, 2008)

[Councilman Criticizes Condo Construction](#) (NY Post, Feb 11, 2008)

A Queens councilman yesterday called for a change in zoning laws to prevent the construction of hotels in residential areas as "a back-door way" to build condos.

[Subprime Crisis Festers in New York](#) (City Room, Feb 11, 2008)

[Craigslist Scams Targeting Renters](#) (Daily News, Feb 11, 2008)

[After Evacuation, Artists Begin an Effort to Save Their Haven](#) (NY Times, Feb 10, 2008)

[Suing the Smoker Next Door](#) (NY Times, Feb 9, 2008)

[A Fee That Developers Would Like to See Rise](#) (NY Times, Feb 6, 2008)

[Brooklyn Home Prices Up, Sales Down in 2007](#) (Crain's, Feb 6, 2008)

[Better Homes for the Apocalypse](#) (City Room, Feb 6, 2008)

[January Had the Highest Monthly Foreclosure Rise in Two Years](#) (NY Post, Feb 5, 2008)

[Spitzer's Budget Plans, and the Iffy Real Estate Deals Behind Them](#) (NY Times, Feb 4, 2008)

page

THE MAYONNAISE JAR, concluded

the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand.'

One of the students raised her hand and inquired what the coffee represented. The professor smiled and said, 'I'm glad you asked.'

The coffee just shows you that no matter how full your life may seem, there's always room for a couple of cups of coffee with a friend.'

STA WEBSITE RESOURCES

Don't forget to take advantage of the information and help our website offers.

There are many ways to do so, so many that one hardly knows where to start. You can search for your next job, or post your resume if you're a member. You can read questions and answers, a few of which are reprinted in this issue of the newsletter on page 5.

Our JOBS page changes quite often as new jobs are posted and old postings are removed. The local real estate management industry is starting to figure out that a free help-wanted ad on our site can be quite beneficial for them.

Our RESUMES page accepts resumes from paid-up members, some of whom have reported great interest from management and co-op or condo boards alike, as prospective employers are always looking for good potential new employees.



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