

TECH TIPS

FROM NASSCO

TECH TIPS BY NASSCO IS A BI-MONTHLY ARTICLE ON TRENDS, BEST PRACTICES AND INDUSTRY ADVICE FROM NASSCO'S TRENCHLESS TECHNOLOGY MEMBERSHIP PROFESSIONALS.



THE AUTHOR AND TRIC ASSISTANT OFFICE MANAGER LAURA SERVIN ISSUE TEMPORARY CERTIFICATES TO PHCC PRESENTATION ATTENDEES.

CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR INSTALLERS

By NASSCO member John Rafferty, Director of Marketing and Technical Support, TRIC Tools Inc.

Customers in the construction industry, including public and private utilities, expect predictable standards in workmanship and service, along with safety and environmental compliance on the job. While industry trade standards typically govern procedures and material use, they are more job-specific than they are tool-specific. Building codes and standards are enforced on local, state, and national levels, and they are the text that governs the work—the end result—more than the equipment used to do the work. The equipment manufacturers' trade license establishes the standards on the safe and effective use of the construction equipment used on the job.

Both contractors and utilities who work with specialized equipment should follow specific guidelines to ensure safe and effective operation. Regardless of how established this equipment is in the field, the manufacturer assumes the ultimate responsibility to institute standards of safety and efficiency with respect to the use of that particular product, in many cases over and above safety regulations and/or disclosures imposed by state and federal (and even international) agencies such as OSHA, UPC, IAPMO, and the like. Companies who take the initiative to communicate best practices clearly and thoroughly, through various media, are elevating their industry as well as their brand. That communication can be enforced, and reinforced, in a variety of ways.

The Book

An operator's manual is the traditional reference for the use and maintenance of practically any physical product, especially a tool or device that requires assembly or contains moving parts. Theoretically, the more specialized, expensive, and/or potentially dangerous the product, the more detailed and illustrative the instructions. The problem with instructions, as virtually any consumer knows, is that they rarely accompany their product past unpacking. An effective user guide is clear, simple, and well-illustrated. It should also be provided in a sturdy and conveniently sized format to make it a useful field-reference. The operator's manual should also be available on the company web site.

The Class

Manufacturers of special tools such as underground construction equipment should require periodic training and certification in the use of their tools. Just like certification for first aid/CPR, confined space operations, shoring, etc., the classroom process entails

a presentation and/or demonstration followed by a quiz and discussion, after which attendees receive a dated, wallet-sized certificate. This training is not limited to contractors. There is a growing demand for certification by engineers and inspectors in the field, even though many of these certification processes are not formally recognized by any official agency. Once there is a critical mass of users, however, the call for standards manifests itself. The manufacturer must then take responsibility to define the standards and take the lead in how those standards are delivered and ultimately put into practice.

The Web

The company website and social media networks comprise the network of information that includes company history and branding, product listings, industry updates, human interest, project logs, and most importantly, technical support. The Internet is a vast store in which to consolidate both brand and message across multiple portals. Certification and other technical instruction can eventually be offered online to members (paying customers) in good standing.

The Commitment

Company affiliates, distributors, and other trusted partners are invaluable in offering field support and training when needed. When the decision is close—or even not so close—customers will often choose one company over another based on the quality of their training and their service reputation.

Manufacturers who are dedicated to the safest and best use of their equipment ultimately promote the success of their customers, which in turn increases brand value. Upholding high standards is not always easy, but the end result is that everyone wins.