ILLINOIS MASTER PLUMBER

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF PLUMBING • HEATING • COOLING • CONTRACTORS

Volume 112, No. 11 November, 2026



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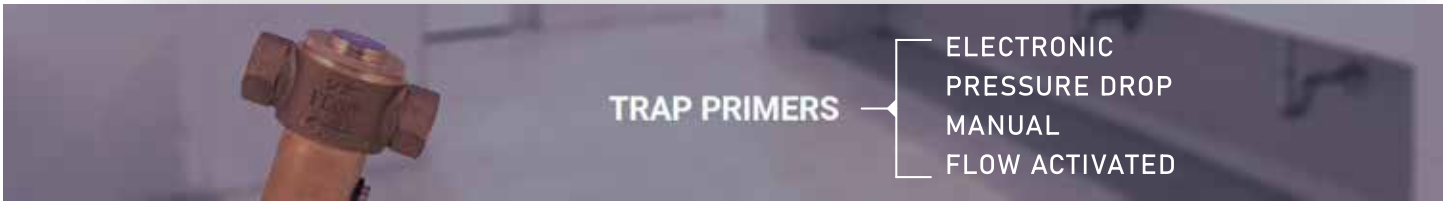
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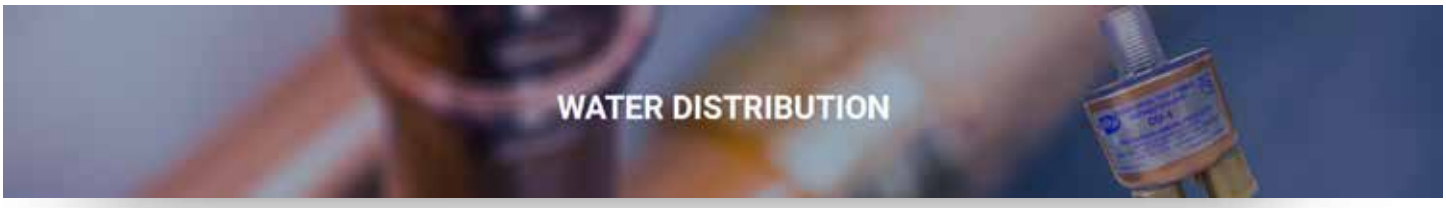
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President's Thoughts

by Tom Mahoney
Illinois PHCC President

Giving Thanks

This is the time of year that we traditionally remember our good fortune, the fine people in our family and circle of friends, the co-workers who are with us side by side in our companies, our valued neighbors, and what many would call the "blessings" in our lives.

I want to use some of this space to make sure we don't forget to express our appreciation to those in our amazing industry who stand with and support us as the member contractors who comprise the Illinois PHCC – our Associate members, our sponsors, exhibitors, and our advertisers. Admittedly, it can be an easy oversight to take these valued industry peers for granted. But I assure you, we would miss them all if they suddenly were gone.

We count on the distributors, the manufacturers and the service providers who quietly but continually help our businesses while we concentrate on taking care of our customers. The sponsors take the extra step and devote the added funding that keeps our costs reasonable and what we do for our contractor members affordable. The advertisers come through month after month by sharing pertinent information in the pages of this publication, and their financial backing is a crucial component of taking the "Illinois Master Plumber" from the association office to the printer, to the post office, and to your mailbox. Our Expo exhibitors not only make our annual March tradeshow worth attending, but they also pay for that privilege – and we appreciate it. Our CEU class instructors, our volunteers, our local chapter execs, and the incredible Auxiliary team likewise all contribute in many important ways and deserve our thanks.

This is also the month of the year that our country devotes special attention and recognition to those who have served in our armed forces on Veteran's



Day (November 11). I'm sure you share the warm feeling I get when I hear an active-duty member or a veteran of our military branches being told "thank you for your service." Whether they are living or have passed on, we owe our respect and our gratitude to all those who have worn a uniform for the United States.

The holiday season is fast approaching, which means Christmas and gift giving for many is coming soon. Here's an idea for a present that benefits the Auxiliary at the same time! Page 21 of this issue features the order form for the Illinois Auxiliary's plumbing license-law t-shirts which are available in long or short sleeve versions. I believe that your employees would enjoy receiving a shirt as a festive gift this season, which will simultaneously send a strong message about the safety and professionalism of qualified plumbers performing the work that makes us proud and prosperous.

There is no need to tell the recipients that this shirt gift idea was my suggestion – just mention that Santa has been known to say: "you'd better watch out for posers who think they can advertise or do plumbing work without a current and valid license." The color of the shirt is also bright and somewhat festive – perfect for a sleigh ride on a foggy night.

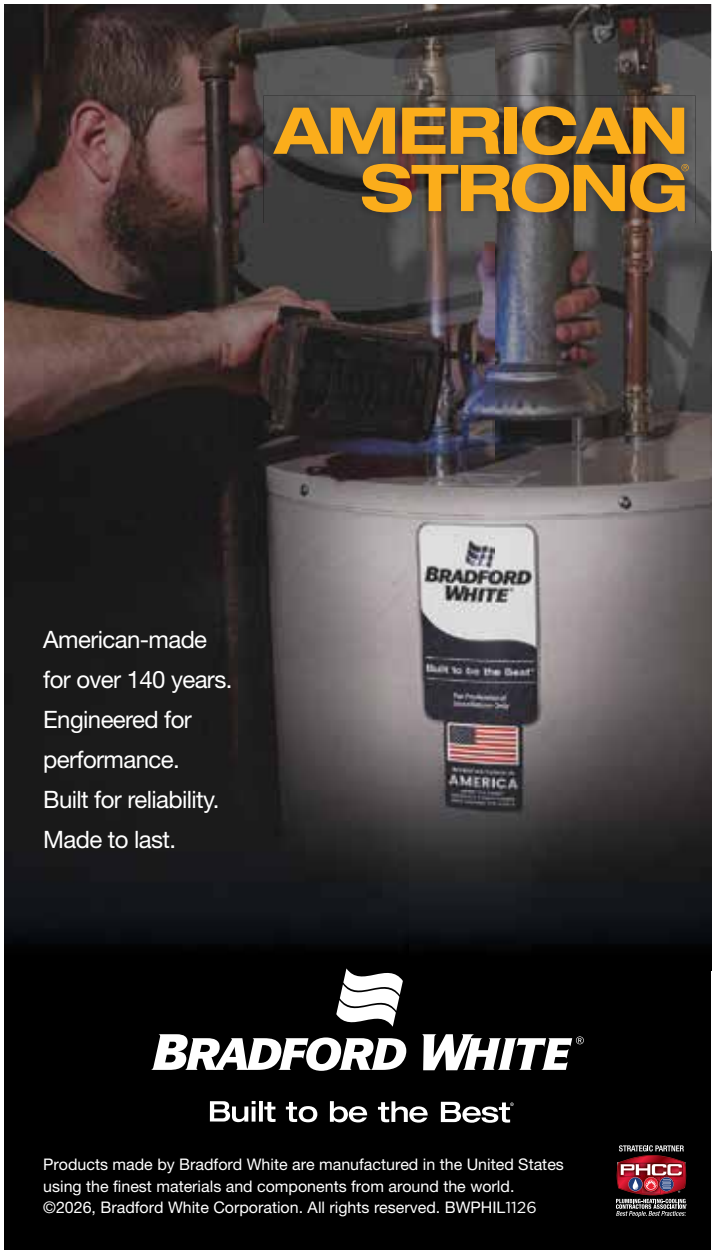
In closing, I hope you enjoy the fall colors, the lights of the holiday season, and the final few months of this year.

All the best,

Tom Mahoney

FALL MEMBERSHIP SPECIAL!

If you are not currently a PHCC member, now is the perfect time to join! Any new member who joins PHCC between now and December 31st of 2026, will have their dues paid through December 31, 2027. That gives you free bonus months of membership benefits for FREE for the rest of 2026, and locks in your 2027 dues at the 2026 rate. See the membership application in this issue. Questions? Call or email the Illinois PHCC at 800-795-PHCC, bev@ilphcc.com or shelly@ilphcc.com.



Calendar of Events

NOVEMBER 13, 2026

IL PHCC Online CEU Class

JANUARY 8, 2027

IL PHCC Online CEU Class

FEBRUARY 5 & 20, 2027

IL PHCC Online CEU Class

MARCH 19, 2027

IL PHCC Expo & Educational Day
Drury Lane Conference Center
Oakbrook Terrace, IL

MARCH 20, 2027

IL PHCC Board Meeting
Hilton Suites
Oakbrook Terrace, IL

JUNE 10, 2027

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2026/27 Illinois PHCC CEU SCHEDULE

The Illinois PHCC schedule for online and in-person classes for the 2027 renewal year is listed below. These classes offer a minimum of 4 different speakers and the topics included in each class this year are as follows:

Illinois Energy Conservation Code Plumbing Provisions,
Separators & Drainage Systems,
Mandatory Positive Response (JULIE OneCall),
The Effects of Water Softners on Water Heater Performance, And/or Plumbing in Healthcare

All Illinois PHCC classes will provide State hours for Certified Inspectors and Licensed Plumbers. Please visit our website at www.ilphcc.com for the latest information and to register for a class. Registration links will be live at least 6 weeks prior to the class date.

2026-2027
Continuing Education Dates

Friday, November 13, 2026
12:00 pm – 4:00 pm (Online)

Friday, January 8, 2027
12:00 pm – 4:00 pm (Online)

Friday, February 5, 2027
12:00 pm – 4:00 pm (Online)

Saturday, February 20, 2027
8:00 am – 12:00 pm (Online)

Friday, March 19, 2027
9:00 am – 1:00 pm (In person)
Drury Lane Conference Center,
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Friday, April 23, 2027
12:00 pm – 4:00 pm (Online)



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GF Industry and Infrastructure Flow Solutions
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- PCA of Greater Chicago
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AI vs Cognition: Knowledge vs Initiative
By Mark Breslin

AI use is exponentially up. Cognition measurement in schools is already down. Knowledge is now via subscription. What is the strategic impact on learning and development in the workplace and our industry?

Let's go beyond the over-reported doom and gloom of a gutted job market. Let's focus on people, leverage, and opportunity shift.

AI use in schools (driven in large measure by Google) is already showing a tangible reduction in cognitive function. And let's make the likely assumption that this will increase and continue. We are giving people a "mental exoskeleton" or maybe the equivalent of the e-bike boost. But what comes easily does not build capacity and breeds dependence. Inadvertent dumbing down seems the path we are on.

Knowledge is now billable. We now buy it like electricity. So subject matter experts aren't worth anything anymore. If the model of "school creates knowledge creates opportunity creates career" is broken. If basic to advanced-level knowledge is available at your fingertips, then what will differentiate the value of our employees? If the combination of reduced mental challenges and readily available answers and resources makes people less capable/qualified/valuable – what takes its place?

What takes its place is Initiative.

The future of the workplace, the highest-valued asset and the thing that is both expected and elusive, is initiative.

As reported recently in the Wall Street Journal, KPMG has begun a discretionary bonus system that recognizes and rewards initiative. Serious money and visionary strategy. Although agentic AI is being designed to take initiative (with some damn sketchy results lately), there will be no substitute for characteristics and skills that leverage initiative.

So is initiative a skill, an inherent characteristic, or some of both? It doesn't matter. What matters is that it becomes a part of the value system, operational ethos, and employee expectations of the future.

What are the issues, challenges, and opportunities?

1. Shifting training and development from knowledge and policy to thought processes and behaviors. And to be honest, I think someone is going to make a lot of money by reinventing primary up to collegiate-level education by doing this, as well. Critical thinking, independent judgment and analysis, team building and alignment, and emotional intelligence are examples of my suggested shift. Knowledge is no longer the path to secure employment and relevance – it is going to be knowing how, when, and why to take action.

2. Addressing what barriers are standing in the way of many Gen Z employees embracing initiative. Another significant report in the WSJ indicated that there are some clear gaps in younger workers related to initiative and problem-solving. 43% of corporate employers report serious challenges for them in regard to independent thinking, difficult conversations & feedback, clarity of priorities, and related issues. And AI is only going to make this tendency (dependency) even more challenging. Let's start thinking about how to give them the tools they need to excel.

3. Training and retraining older leaders to empower and **engage through leading by inquiry**. Compelling independent action, risk-taking, and experiential learning is not just organic but cultivated. Leaders need to think

of the promotion of initiative (and accepting it might not be perfect or done their way) is a desired outcome, not just a trade-off.

4. Like KPMG, we need to recognize and tangibly reward the activity and practice of initiative as much as possible. From hiring to promotion to evaluations and compensation/bonuses – initiative needs to rise as high as emotional intelligence, work ethic, and integrity as drivers of advancement.

As a CEO for some decades, my number one identifier of potential was initiative. It was the one thing I intentionally praised and recognized (and promoted for). It was the key driver of our organizational success. I may have stumbled into it then, but embracing it now is not optional; it is essential.

In closing, really, my greatest worry about our immediate future is not that technology is going to kill us (although, if it does and I don't get to spend my 401(k), I'm going to be pissed). It is that we will inadvertently dumb ourselves down and someone else will monetize our decline. In the workplace, the cost savings impact of tech is clearly going to be a primary driver of change, but an offset is necessary. And that offset is the cultivation, encouragement, and prioritization of initiative as an organizational value and individual strategy for keeping the blade sharp.

Anything less is a disservice to our businesses, our country, and ourselves.

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Mandatory Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

Public Act 101-0221 (commonly referred to as the Workplace Transparency Act), requires Illinois employers to provide sexual harassment prevention training to their employees on an annual basis, regardless of the size of the company.

Under this law, Illinois employers have until December 31st each year to train employees on sexual harassment prevention. The Act provides minimum standards that must be included in the training. To assist your business in complying with this law, the Illinois Department of Human Rights has posted the following information on its website:

- A FAQ for Sexual Harassment Prevention Training
- Minimum Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Standards for All Employers

Employers must either develop their own sexual harassment prevention training program that equals or exceeds the minimum standards for sexual harassment prevention training outlined in Section 2-109(B) of the Illinois Human Rights Act, or they may use the model training provided by the IDHR. The model training program can be downloaded by visiting https://www2.illinois.gov/dhr/Training/Pages/State-of-Illinois-Sexual-Harassment-Prevention-Training-Model.aspx

For more information, please visit IDHR's website at www.illinois.gov/dhr/training.



Illinois Association of Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors

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City_____County_____State_____Zip_____

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Type of Business Activities
(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

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❑ HVAC
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❑ Fire Sprinkler Systems
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U.S. Apprentice Charles Goede Earns International Medal for Excellence at WorldSkills

By John Zink, Vice President of Development and Communications



U.S. Apprentice Charles Goede Earns International Medal for Excellence, Ranking Among World's Top Plumbers at WorldSkills Shanghai 2026

20-year-old Connecticut native scores 704 in plumbing and heating category – marking the first time a U.S. delegate medals at global competition in nearly a decade

Charles Goede became the first U.S. competitor in nearly a decade to win the distinguished Medal for Excellence in the plumbing and heating category at the 48th WorldSkills Competition in Shanghai, China (Sept. 22–27).

Goede, a 20-year-old fourth-year plumbing apprentice with the United Association Local 777 from Waterford, Conn., competed against 32 of the top young tradespeople from around the world. The grueling 4-day event tested competitors' skill, precision, craftsmanship and time management under high-stakes pressure.

The Medal for Excellence recognizes competitors who achieve an elite international standard, demonstrating true mastery over complex fluid, pressure, and climate control systems. Based on the official WorldSkills scale, Goede finished with a 704 score, placing him just 6% away from the top score from Switzerland's contestant, who took home Gold. Goede is the first American to medal in the category since Asher Chicoine earned a score of 702 in 2017.

Over 22.5 hours of competition, participants were tasked with assembling four complex plumbing and mechanical modules:

- **Day 1**: Drainage, urinal carriers, sink and shower installation.
- **Day 2:** Steel piping with HDPE fusion fittings and sink installation.
- **Day 3**: Boiler configuration using steel, copper loops, and multi-layer PEX.
- **Day 4**: Fixture installation and a heat pump water heater requiring precise copper pipe bending (Goede executed this in just seven bends, under the 8-bend limit).

Goede qualified for the U.S. delegation through SkillsUSA and spent nearly a year preparing under the direction of his technical expert, PHCC Educational Foundation board member Larry Shoemaker and Vinnie Valente from Local 777, alongside a network of dedicated industry mentors.

Shoemaker emphasized that Goede's achievement places him in the 90th percentile globally, comparable to graduating at the top of a Dean's List.

"Charlie really did an exceptional job showcasing the advanced skill and technical know-how required to succeed in the plumbing and heating industry," said Shoemaker. "He was committed from the start and worked very hard putting in close to 250 hours of intensive training on top of his full-time job. His success on the world stages proves what's possible in the plumbing and HVAC trades and I hope it inspires more young people to consider it as a career."

Goede is expected to complete his apprenticeship and take his journeyman's exam before the end of the year. He currently works for a contractor on large-scale commercial projects, including a nuclear power plant shutdown – the specialized pipe-bending skills he learned while training for WorldSkills afforded him this opportunity and opened doors he never imagined.

"It was such a tremendous honor to represent my country at the WorldSkills Competition in Shanghai," said Goede. "Receiving a Medal of Excellence was an incredible achievement and I really look forward to seeing how far the trades can take me. There really is no limit!"

Goede's journey was made possible through support from industry partners, including the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors National Association (PHCC) Educational Foundation, the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO), UA Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 777 JATC, and DEWALT.

"Charles represents the best of American technical training and dedication," said Chelle Travis, Executive Director of SkillsUSA. "We are thrilled to celebrate his achievement on the global stage as he demonstrates the vital role of skilled trades in our economy."

IAPMO CEO Dave Viola agreed: "We couldn't be prouder of what Charles accomplished in Shanghai. Earning a Medal for Excellence on the world stage speaks to the skill, dedication and hard work he put into preparing for this competition. He represented the United States and the plumbing profession exceptionally well, and IAPMO is proud to have been part of his journey."

Mark McManus, General President of the United Association added: "Charles Goede represents the very best of the UA and our gold-standard registered apprenticeship and training programs. We are so proud of his accomplishments at WorldSkills in Shanghai, but we are not surprised at his success in earning a Medal for Excellence. His dedication, hard work, and commitment to his craft were on full display showcasing more than 137 years of UA training and education, as he brought home some well-deserved hardware."

The 48th WorldSkills Competition – often referred to as the "Olympics of the Skilled Trades," even consisting of an opening ceremony similar to the one held for the world's top athletes – brought together nearly 1,400 competitors from 73 countries and regions competing across 64 trade disciplines.

To learn more about the WorldSkills USA team, visit worldskillsusa.org.

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HR Question of the Month

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Question

One of our employees constantly clocks in early and starts working before his shift is supposed to begin. He also clocks out after his shift is supposed to end. Since he does this all the time, he usually ends up working over 40 hours a week, and we have to pay him overtime. However, we have a very clear policy stating that employees must receive prior approval before working overtime. Can we refuse to pay him for the unauthorized overtime he works, since he violated our policy and did not receive prior approval? If not, what can we do?

Answer

In its Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Hours Worked Advisor, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)provides, "It is the duty of management to exercise control and see that work is not performed if the employer does not want it to be performed. An employer cannot sit back and accept the benefits of an employee's work without considering the time spent to be hours worked."

Thus, employers must timely pay all wages for hours that they know or should know employees worked. If an employee clocks in before his scheduled start time and starts working, this time is payable, even if it results in his working when he is not supposed to and incurring unauthorized overtime in violation of company policy. The same rule applies if an employee continues working and clocks out after his scheduled end time. As the DOL notes in its guidance, "Merely making a rule against such work is not enough. The employer has the power to enforce the rule and must make every effort to do so."

That said, as the DOL suggests, an employer is not without recourse. Employees who clock in before the start of their shifts, clock out after their shifts end, and/or incur unauthorized overtime can be disciplined for any such policy violations. However, the disciplinary action for these types of infractions must stop short of failing or refusing to pay wages (including overtime) that are otherwise due.

In sum, while employees can be disciplined for violating company policies relative to adhering to a specific schedule, any proposal to dock pay as a form of disciplinary action can lead to unpaid wage claims. Employers should check their state and local laws for any additional rules that may apply.

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