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Press Release

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ABMA REACTS TO WASHINGTON POST PUBLIC SCHOOLS EXPOSÉ

“...every one of the individuals responsible for the conditions cited in the article – elected, appointed or otherwise – should be held personally accountable for the conditions they have created over the years and over which they knew they could have had better control.”

This was the response by ABMA President Randy Rawson to an exposé by the *Washington Post* [“The Price of Neglect: Not Maintained, Costly Heating Systems Fail in Drove,” front page, December 31, 2008] on the failure of 40 of 55 new or renovated heating systems in District of Columbia schools. The Post notes that school administrators have “had to sink more than \$10 million into emergency repairs this year alone” when, if properly budgeted, it might have taken only \$100,000 a year to avoid the problems.

In an email comment to the *Post*, Rawson singled out school officials, school administrators and others involved in school budgets, saying “Not only have they discomforted countless thousands of students and teachers and needlessly cost the taxpayers, but they have created potentially unsafe conditions threatening the safety of children.” Rawson went on to note that such behavior is not isolated to Washington, D. C., but the same story too often plays out all over the Nation.

One school maintenance official was quoted as saying that the computerized controls made troubleshooting more difficult. Rawson admonished, “Sophisticated (computerized) boiler controls and instrumentation systems are standard packages on all modern boiler systems – or should be.... By their very nature such systems make it easier to troubleshoot and, even more importantly, to help keep a system from reaching the point where troubleshooting becomes necessary at all.”

Rawson went on to say that the maintenance official’s accusation was evidence that “...neglect comes not only in willfully refusing to set-aside adequate and continuing maintenance money...but in also reducing or eliminating the types of on-going boiler operator training necessary to equip operational staffs with the skills and understanding to effectively manage today’s more technical steam and hot water heating systems.”

“...boiler manufacturers...spell out all along the way...” their recommendations to keep the equipment and systems they manufacture operating in the safest and most efficient way possible and to lengthen the life of their boilers, “but unfortunately they are too often ignored or willfully disregarded or compromised for the sake of economy,” the ABMA official lamented. “Installation, operation and maintenance: interdependent conditions that when properly funded and executed over the long term will assure high quality, long-life boiler performance and lasting returns on taxpayer investments,” Rawson concluded.

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The American Boiler Manufacturers Association (ABMA) is the national nonprofit trade association of commercial, institutional, industrial, heat recovery, and electricity-generating boiler and combustion equipment manufacturers located in Vienna, Virginia.