



POLICE, FIRE, & THE OIL MAN

By Barry Aruda

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The question, “Who you gonna call?” was popularized in the 1980’s with the success of the Ghostbusters movie franchise. Each of us were told to make the call if there was “something strange in the neighborhood,” and Drs. Spengler, Stantz, and Venkman would show up minutes later, all in the name of busting ghouls. Service on demand, just the way we like it.

Fortunately for us, things like spirits and specters aren’t a reality. What *is* reality, however, is that emergencies can strike at any moment, in any of our lives. When issues arise in the middle of the night or on weekends, there really are only three groups of dedicated people that we can source: Police, Fire, and the local heating oil dealer.

Really! Think about it. Who else is going to trek out in the freezing twilight to help the homeowner? The police will thwart an attempted burglary. The fire department will respond to a blaze. And the oil man will

come when you call, providing you with heat when you’ve run out, or when the burner won’t kick on. That’s it. No electricians or plumbers need apply!

Do me a favor, next time you meet one of your association members check on technician availability. I believe you will see a pattern. What I notice is job openings are at a premium. Could be a signal of company growth but could also be a red flag. Talking to dealers all the time, I hear it. The industry is speaking—complaining about the same thing—from New England to the Mid-Atlantic and everywhere in between!

We can all agree that heating oil dealers are an integral part of our communities—someone our families can rely on—but we also agree that fewer and fewer men and women are going into the business of becoming technicians. Trade school attendance may be up over the last half-decade, but the fact is fact. The job market is hungry for able-bodied people to service oil burner equipment. It’s a battle that many dealers are fighting. Good help is hard to find.

QUESTION: How does a fuel dealer complement the technical skills offered the customer?

As fuel quality professionals, the AFS team offers our expertise to those dealers in a handful of ways, including storage and tank housekeeping protocols, fuel enhancement programs and, bankable field proven marketing strategies. Sure, if I know someone is looking for a rewarding and secure job, I’ll send them your way, but more often, I have to try and help my customers overcome the challenges of, first, finding someone qualified, and willing to go

out in the middle of the night on overtime pay.

Most recently I received a call from a customer who lost a technician because the overtime pay didn't balance with the intrusion of lost family time. And on the other side of the equation, the customer isn't happy that they've lost their heat and have an added expense, and the dealer isn't thrilled they've got to play the liability game with someone on the road. Never mind the technician that needs to get out of bed and into a cold truck with his tools.

The advice I typically provide dealers begins with a question: What if I could minimize that pain for you? Of course, they answer, "I'd love it."

For more than two-decades Advanced Fuel Solutions, has had the privilege and unique experience of assisting fuel dealers 24/7 with fuel quality and storage related issues that precede those anxiety riddled no-heat service calls. Our market-leading fuel conditioner for heating oil is a non-stop workhorse that protects fuel and keeps it fresh—stabilizing today's ULSHO/biodiesel blends and the highly anticipated higher blends of tomorrow.

"It's preemptive maintenance," one of my customers told me. "It's peace of mind, knowing I'm ensuring customer satisfaction, while improving work/life balance for my technicians."

That's what makes my day. One, we're helping to protect the integrity of the fuel we service. Better fuel makes for happier customers, and happier customers are more likely to use today's better, safer and cleaner fuel as a heating source for years to come. Second, we are protecting the health and safety of the technicians that dealers lean

upon to get the job done. The less they are dispatched in terrible weather or the dark of night, the greater the impact on potential OSHA mishaps.

Technicians can't be there all the time to fight against issues like moisture and bacterial contamination in tanks. But preventative maintenance and proper storage protocols can, and *will* work.

Think about what goes into your fuel. If the answer is "nothing," it might be time to think about preventative maintenance strategies and a stabilization package. The ghostly job market is affecting us all, you're not alone. Together we can shore up your fuel quality defenses!

Are you ready to believe?

Barry Aruda is the Northeast Regional Manager for Advanced Fuel Solutions. As an admitted "fuel quality fanatic," he spends a great deal of his full-time job testing fuel for analysis, recommending preventative defensive strategies, and working with dealers to overcome the challenges of housekeeping and changing technology.