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THE DES REPORT

A Publication of Metro Nashville District Energy System | **Summer Edition 2011**[In this issue:](#)[GM's Corner](#)[Annual Golf Tournament](#)[5 Questions With DES Board
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GM's Corner

 by Tim Hestle

Preventive Medicine

As we age, it seems that the majority of us spend a lot more time in doctors' offices. With the rising cost of health care, those of us fortunate enough to have decent insurance usually have modest co-payments or deductibles for things like physicals or teeth cleaning. Have you ever wondered why these routine checkups are so inexpensive for the patient?

Insurance companies have found that it is more cost-effective to diagnose and treat illnesses before they become more serious, thus heading off repeated doctor visits, extended hospital stays and additional payouts. Good health oftentimes is a result of preventive medicine.

The same logic applies to other things in our everyday lives, for instance, your car. If you keep the oil changed and the tires rotated and have the vehicle tuned up and serviced at the recommended intervals, chances are you will not have any catastrophic failures. In all likelihood, it will give you years of reliable and dependable service. The cost of an oil change is insignificant compared to the cost of a new engine. The cost of rotating your tires is nothing compared to replacing them. Your car's health depends on preventive maintenance.

Sometimes things break. If you fall and break your leg stepping off a curb, you will most likely go to the emergency room to have the broken bone reset. Instead of assigning blame to the sidewalk contractor or property owner for your clumsiness, in the future you should be more careful and look for ways to keep this misfortune from recurring. The same thing applies to machinery and equipment. If something critical breaks, repair it, on an emergency basis if necessary. This is known as reactive maintenance. Next, try to figure out why it happened. Then, if possible, take measures to keep it from recurring. With the exception of gross negligence, it has been my experience that trying to assign blame is normally counterproductive.

Sometimes things wear out. We all know people we consider elderly. Regardless of how well they take care of themselves, sometimes things just wear out. They may have to have a hip or knee replaced; otherwise they could become bedridden or confined to a wheelchair. Insurance costs for the latter will more than likely be much greater than the cost of the joint replacement operation, not to mention a person's quality of life and productiveness in society.

After a period of time, worn-out building and equipment parts will have to be replaced. If your

roof begins showing signs of wear, it makes sense to replace it before it starts to leak and ruins your ceilings, furniture and floors. If a pump or electric motor starts making noise, it is likely that the bearings need to be replaced before the rotating elements are destroyed and you are forced to purchase a new pump or new motor. This is proactive maintenance.

Equipment maintenance in the Energy Distribution System and Energy Generation Facility requires a high level of attention to ensure continued reliable and dependable service to the Metro Nashville District Energy System customers. As equipment ages, efficiency numbers usually deteriorate. Amazingly, preventive maintenance activities have helped us increase plant efficiencies over the past seven years.

Metro Nashville District Energy System customers, building owners and operators are encouraged to perform preventive maintenance on their buildings and equipment, as well. Building maintenance includes many things; but related to heating and cooling, the heat exchangers and the heating, ventilation and air conditioning coils should be cleaned routinely. Pumps, piping and electrical systems should be inspected, monitored and maintained. Good building maintenance benefits everyone on the system.

Although we cannot purchase a new body, we can prolong its usefulness through preventive, reactive and proactive medicine. Similarly, the usefulness of equipment and machinery can be extended through preventive, reactive and proactive maintenance. These principles can be applied to most things in life.

The Annual Constellation Energy/Metro DES Golf Tournament



The annual Constellation Energy/Metro DES golf tournament will be held on Saturday, July 16, at Pine Creek Golf Course in Mt. Juliet. The tournament will kick off with a shotgun start at 8 a.m. If you plan to participate, please arrive at least 30 minutes early in order to register and warm up. As in the past, the format will be a best-ball scramble, and a barbecue luncheon and awards ceremony will take place immediately following play.

The cost to enter is \$70 per person, and includes range balls, greens fees, a cart, lunch and prizes. If you are interested in participating, please email Tim Hestle at tim.hestle@constellation.com to request a registration form.

We hope to see you on the links!



5 Questions With DES Board Member Brian Taylor

Brian Taylor is a broker with Karr Realty, a commercial real estate firm in West Nashville. He is a native of Savannah, Tenn., but has lived in Nashville for 19 years, and in Middle Tennessee for 23 years.

Taylor is very involved in the community, and has served on several boards in Middle Tennessee, including the Young Leaders Council, the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce's West Area Business Council, the Chamber's Government Issues Committee, Metro Beer Board, Green Hills YMCA, The District Downtown, YPNashville Advisory Board, Greater Nashville Association of Realtors, Nashville Emerging Leaders and the Phoenix Club of Nashville. He is also the president of the Howell Park Homeowners Association, a downtown condo neighborhood located just two blocks from the Metro DES plant.

Taylor has a BBA in economics and finance from Middle Tennessee State University.

Taylor joined the Metro DES Advisory Board in 2009 and has been a great asset, using his economics and finance background to help guide the direction of Metro DES. We recently caught up with Taylor to discuss his involvement with Metro DES as a member of the Advisory Board.

Q: You were appointed to the Metro DES Advisory Board in 2009 by Mayor Dean. Prior to being appointed, did you know anything about district energy systems, or was it all new to you?

A: I was familiar with DES and understood its function and purpose, but was quite surprised at the overwhelming efficiencies and cost savings that DES provides its customers.

Q: How has your economics and finance background helped you as a member of the Advisory Board?

A: A good understanding of simple economics – supply and demand and economies of scale. The staff and management team at DES do an outstanding job of watching the markets, keeping a close eye on the costs of energy, and utilizing their experience and expertise to hedge current and future materials and energy cost. This ultimately creates greater economies of scale for DES customers.

As board members, we are challenged with the task of understanding why management and staff make the decisions they make, and ensuring that the end users continue to reap the benefits they expect and that the DES facility operates within its contractual obligations.

Q: Why do you think district energy systems, like the one in Nashville, have yet to be adopted by most large municipalities, with the exception of a few cities like Austin, Seattle and St. Paul? As a Realtor who occasionally helps people buy, sell and lease properties in downtown Nashville, do you think the service DES provides to some residential properties is important from a buyer's perspective?

A: The cost of the infrastructure for a system like DES has to be the primary reason more cities haven't adopted the DES model. Our system has been in place for almost 40 years, and

includes almost 16 miles of underground piping and close to four miles of direct-bury and/or tunnels. The cost of installing this today would be astonishing. Thankfully, four decades ago, our city leaders had enough foresight to create what is a huge benefit for our downtown community today.

The DES benefits for a residential development are directly associated with heating and cooling construction and with operating costs. In areas outside of downtown, developers have to plan for significant costs associated with in-house HVAC systems. A downtown developer, on the other hand, has the ability to shift those costs to other things that make a development an attractive place to live, like user-friendly green spaces for residents. Or it can simply pass along the savings to homeowners. The ability to heat and cool your home using DES energy also creates a much more environmentally friendly impact.

The cost is enormous for office building developers to construct and provide an in-house energy source. DES provides an overwhelming benefit as its cost to construct, and thereby provide the same heating and cooling, is significantly lower.

Q: What's the biggest challenge that Metro DES will face over the next year?

A: The plant is very efficient, and as I stated earlier, DES management and staff diligently remain on top of the issues, both locally and nationally, with regard to energy costs and other related operating matters. Maintenance is an ongoing issue with a system of pipes and tunnels of this age, but the largest issue coming up this next year is bringing the Music City Center online. The staff and management team have spent a great amount of time planning, preparing and ensuring that DES is ready for the addition to the system, which will bring the facility much closer to full capacity. But MCC will operate at much more efficient levels by being on the DES system.

Q: As a member of the Nashville Triathlon Club, you've competed in triathlons and duathlons of various lengths across the state. What's the best advice you would give to someone considering competing in one of these events?

A: Have fun and find someone or a group of likeminded people to train with. Swimming, biking and running by yourself can be, to say the least, very boring, lonely and, quite simply at times, not very much fun. I had a great group of triathletes to train with on a regular basis, which not only provides someone to talk to on those four-plus-hour rides, but the motivation that Nashville's triathlon community provides is amazing and never-ending. I've witnessed friends accomplishing feats they never thought they could all because they had a support team of family, friends and fellow triathletes to push them and be there beside them along the way.

Customer Spotlight: Tennessee Tower

The Tennessee Tower, also known as the William R. Snodgrass Tennessee Tower, is the third-tallest skyscraper in downtown Nashville, at 452 feet. The 31-story building was originally built for the National Life and Accident Insurance Company in 1970, but was bought by the state of Tennessee in 1994 to serve as an office for more than 1,000 state government employees.



The building is named in honor of William R. Snodgrass, a career public servant who served as Tennessee's comptroller of the Treasury for 22 terms, from 1955 to 1999. Snodgrass received numerous accolades and awards during his long tenure of public service, including the title of comptroller emeritus, before passing away in 2008. The William R. Snodgrass Distinguished Leadership Award was also named in his honor. The award recognizes the outstanding leadership of individuals in state government who improved financial management practices, policies, systems or operations, and consistently exhibited the highest personal and professional standards through each year.

On Aug. 31, 2003, the Tennessee Tower was struck by lightning, causing a fire pump to turn on the sprinkler system. Water from the sprinklers struck an electrical unit, shorting out power in the building. While the building was closed for use by employees for two days, temporary generators were employed, allowing state workers to return to the building. The generators were removed when parts arrived to repair the building's own electrical infrastructure.

"We were fortunate to have building management that knew how to respond to this situation, and many of them worked day and night until the building was again ready for occupancy," Department of General Services Deputy Commissioner Tom Chester said.

One of the things the building is best known for is that it was used to display messages by turning on lights in the windows on the front of the building at night. After being dormant for 10 years, a new message – "Peace" – was displayed on Dec. 17, 2007.



Meet Aaron Russell: Maintenance Technician

Q: What do you do at Metro DES, and how long have you been with DES?

A: I came on board in 2000, when it was still the Nashville Thermal Transfer Corporation (NTTC).

As a maintenance technician, my main responsibility is to take care of the plant equipment,

which involves routine inspections and preventive maintenance for the boilers, cooling towers, chillers and pumps. I also occasionally get dispatched to work in the distribution system tunnels, where steam and chilled water travels from the plant to customers.

Q: What path led you to where you are? What did you do before joining DES that prepared you for a career in this industry?

A: I'm a California native who moved to Arkansas to attend vocational school. After I finished school I worked as a maintenance machinist at Pace Industries in Fayetteville, Ark., where I manufactured barbecue grills.

I had a relative who worked at NTTCC, and he helped me get my foot in the door. I've been here for almost eight years now, and I really enjoy this job.

Q: The turnover at Metro DES seems to be very low. Can you tell us what keeps employees here for so long?

A: It's just an overall good place to work. The pay and benefits are good, and it's a good work atmosphere. The people are also one of the highlights. We're a pretty tight-knit team with a common goal, and that is to serve our customers to the best of our ability.

Q: Do Metro DES employees get feedback from the Advisory Board and customers on a regular basis? Internally, how do you guys gauge the plant's efficiency and customer satisfaction?

A: Employees do not generally interact with Metro's Advisory Board. Our feedback comes from the customers. My colleague Chuck Tucker is in charge of customer relations, and he's good about relaying feedback to all of the employees here. The plant's efficiency and customer satisfaction have been really good. We very rarely have any complaints from customers, and have actually received several letters and emails from them letting us know that we're doing a good job. That's a great feeling.

Q: What's the most vital thing DES customers can do to conserve energy and cut costs as we transition into warmer weather? What's the most detrimental thing customers can do at this time of year that could increase energy consumption and costs?

A: The number one thing I would recommend to customers is to keep the temperature consistent. If you need to make a significant temperature change for some reason, try to gradually make an increase or decrease. It's more efficient to slowly raise or lower the temperature.

Q: If you weren't a maintenance technician at Metro DES, what would you like to do for a living?

A: I used to work in security, so that's a possibility. I've always had a passion for motorcycles and I'm also interested in railroads, so I guess I would try to do something related to one of those.

Q: What's the best advice you would give to someone thinking about a career in this industry?

A: Go to school. I'd recommend a vocational training program in industrial maintenance.
