

MECHANICAL CONTRACTING

| IN IT FOR THE LONG HAUL |



Brian Stanger, one of Gold Seal's top plumbers and trouble-shooters, in front of Affinity at Coeur d'Alene.

Gold Seal Mechanical has built a reputation for quality work and customer service

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The year 1969 was remembered by folks in Spokane, Wash., as one of extremes. In February, they had record cold temps – minus 11°F, substantially colder than the average of 22°F. And in August, they sizzled with in record highs of 99°F – 15 degrees higher than normal. It was a great year to start a heating and cooling enterprise.

And as far as they can recall, Robert Sr. and his son Richard Dixon, the father/son team that started Gold Seal Mechanical, theirs was the only plumbing and mechanical firm started that year in the then-much-smaller town of Spokane.

Back in that very last year of the 1960's, Robert and Richard were just

a two-man shop. Both worked out of their own trucks while establishing credit at local supply houses. Today, Gold Seal has blossomed into one of the region's largest plumbing and mechanical contracting firms. They employ over 80 people, run 25 trucks and routinely work a territory in a 100-mile radius of the home shop – an area that includes pieces of four states, including Spokane metro and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho areas – providing complete plumbing, mechanical, backflow prevention and drain cleaning services.

Gold Seal is a company that sees 25 percent residential new installation work, 25 percent new installation commercial work, and a full 50 percent service work that

mostly favors the commercial side of the business. They mostly split their business between plumbing and hydronic work. After all, hydronic heating is well-suited to the rigors of winter weather in the Pacific Northwest.

The company prides itself for their outstanding customer service, well recognized in the area – with a healthy handful of customers who signed on in 1969. Company employees know that when it comes to

plumbing repairs, the first questions a customer asks are, "How much is this going to cost me?"

Or "Will you come back if it isn't fixed properly?"

"Up to a million BTUs an hour for hot water is a large demand by any measure, so we chose several separate water heaters for a modular approach, assuring redundancy."

So, it's no surprise that their first priority is doing their work right the first time.

"Do it right the first time," is sort of a motto around here," said Robert Dixon (Richard's son), estimator at Gold Seal. "We've done well maintaining the reputation and work ethic through the years, even as the company has grown way beyond our expectations."

And, as you'd expect, their experienced journeymen plumbers are all trained to the highest level, licensed, insured, bonded and continue to take courses and



Gold Seal Secretary Courtney Dixon (4th generation from Gold Seal founder) and Dennis Fanara, service department manager, review an invoice.

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certification tests to stay up to date on the latest technology evolving in the industry.

At Affinity – commercial installation and service work

One job within Gold Seal’s 100-mile radius is the Affinity campus in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. Though in the neighboring state, it’s actually just 15

written into the contract, though that’s not common. We explain that our many years in the business have helped us perfect the list of ingredients, and – with that understood – we also stand firm on our commitment to fully guarantee our work, and the equipment.”

At Affinity, Gold Seal chose to install five Bradford White,

challenge. But with the eFs – systems we frequently choose for commercial jobs because of their durability and great track record with us – we don’t expect problems.”

Gold Seal also installed Taco hot water recirculation pumps, assuring that the residents at Affinity would always have hot water quickly. Another key advantage of the facility-wide recirculation of DHW is that precious water isn’t wasted, and residents don’t pay to send wasted water down the drain, either.

“We go back with Taco products a long way,” Fanara explained. “They’re not only reliable, but readily available out here from our local suppliers – should we ever have a quick need for products, and as anyone in the trade knows well, unexpected needs arise every day in this business.”

Protecting the cleanliness of the large volume of domestic water at Affinity is a six-inch stainless steel backflow assembly. Fanara and his team installed the “Silver Eagle” back flow at the facility to protect the purity of the domestic water.

“The backflow is placed in the mechanical room opposite the bank of Bradford White water heaters for easy access,” said John Rodrigues, supervisor of Maintenance at Affinity. “Annual backflow testing is easy, and the assemblies are fully



Washington State Bradford White Rep Ron Williams checks the settings of the water heaters at Affinity at Coeur d’Alene.

miles from Gold Seal.

Perched near the shores of Lake Coeur d’Alene, Affinity prides itself on its lively approach to keeping customers happily engaged. It’s an active-adult, 55 plus independent living community with spacious apartments, floating greens, swimming pools, rec rooms, movie theaters, and variety of services and amenities.

“At Affinity, something’s going on at all times,” said Morgan Breckenridge, the manager at the Coeur d’Alene facility. “We strive to be different.”

With 121 apartments, and private as well as common area restrooms and kitchens, Affinity residents create a healthy demand for clean water, and plenty of heated domestic water, too. Meeting (and preferably exceeding) all facets of comfort was a key design criteria for the facility when it was constructed in 2012.

“Our Gold Seal crew did all of the underground and above ground drains at Affinity, as well as the above ground water, all of their new fixtures and water heaters – then we ran water and gas lines to them,” explained Dennis Fanara, service department manager at Gold Seal.

“Our recipe for mechanical equipment includes the best, most reliable equipment,” Fanara added. “Occasionally, customers demand equipment other than what we’ve

100-gallon, 199,000 BTU eF water heaters to meet all of Affinity’s domestic hot water needs.

“Up to a million BTUs an hour for hot water is a large demand by any



Eric Willis, apprentice at Gold Seal, examines a tankless water heater and Watts OneFlow descaler. Gold Seal has found the water treatment systems to be especially useful at solving vexing water scale problems with heat exchangers.

measure,” Fanara continued.

“So we chose several separate water heaters for a modular approach, assuring redundancy,” Fanara said. “If a problem arose for one of the units, the others would most likely meet demand without

protected there.”

“We were extremely pleased with the work Gold Seal did for us,” Breckenridge added. “In fact, we keep using them to do the plumbing



At left, Watts valves and backflow assembly protect domestic water at Affinity at Coeur d'Alene. Right: Gold Seal Purchasing Agent Kevin Peacock pulls a Bradford White water heater out of the warehouse to replace one that had been installed. All of the Gold Seal service vans carry one Bradford White electric and natural gas water heater at all times.

work for most of our Affinity locations. We currently have five facilities in Washington alone, two in Idaho, and one each in Colorado and Montana."

Around the town

Back in Spokane, service technicians went to perform routine maintenance for a light commercial wall-hung mod-con at an office and warehouse facility. Next to it, they'd installed a small, six-gallon-per-minute Watts OneFlow anti-scale system, for the tankless water heater that feeds three bathroom sinks, a kitchen sink and a hot water hosebib used for cleaning off drain equipment.

OneFlow "template-assisted crystallization" systems prevent scale by transforming dissolved hardness minerals into harmless, inactive microscopic crystal particles. These particles make their way through plumbing systems without latching on to pipes, fixtures, valves or heating elements and are available in many connection sizes to meet flow rates from 0.5 to 450 gpm or more.

Gold Seal has had great success with the water treatment systems, well-suited to combat the heavily mineralized groundwater supplies in their area.

"We especially like that we can keep water heaters and 'combi' boiler heat exchangers from scaling up this way, and with the added benefit of not having to use salt to do it," Fanara said.

Nearby, Gold Seal technicians stopped in to perform pre-heating

season maintenance at a small commercial facility where a boiler delivered most of its heat to warehouse space through several small, 150 MBH Modine "HotDawg" unit heaters.

Gold Seal is often called upon for historic renovations, such as the nearby Davenport Hotel. The Davenport, built in 1914, is a regional landmark and architectural masterpiece, favored by tourists and historic structure aficionados alike. In 2000, the hotel was gutted, and completely remodeled.

Gold Seal was chosen to do all the plumbing work, drain lines, water lines and fixtures. True to their recipe, the list of components included Bradford White water heaters and Taco recirculation pumps.

"When we talk with clients about the work we do there's always a moment of recognition when we drop that name," Richard said.

The Davenport, opened as a destination in its own right, offering palatial splendor and 5-star service. In 2002, after the hotel narrowly escaped demolition, Walt and Karen Worthy completed a multimillion-dollar restoration, sparing

no expense in restoring its glamour.

Those who walk through the Davenport Hotel walk in the footsteps of film stars, explorers, famous writers and politicians including Charles Lindbergh, Amelia Earhart, Clark Gable, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, John F. Kennedy, Babe Ruth, John Travolta, Bill Cosby and Ringo Starr.

Gold Seal's commercial clientele also include Lowe's, Best Buy and Walmart.

"We've been called on to do their plumbing, drain lines and fixtures, as well as routine maintenance work," Robert said.

Year after year, decade after decade, the clients continue to call on Gold Seal because they've earned the symbol of excellence, and substantiate the chosen

name.

"Here at Gold seal, we now have fourth-generation plumbers and technicians working for the company," Richard concluded. "Maintaining excellence in service isn't only a job performed for clients, it means providing excellent working conditions for our own employees. The track record speaks for itself. We're very pleased with the results." ●



Brian Stanger makes sure the gas pressure is staying constant during a startup check at Affinity at Coeur d'Alene.