

# CONTRACTOR®

THE NEWSMAGAZINE OF MECHANICAL CONTRACTING

PLUMBING | PIPING | HYDRONICS | RADIANT | BATH/KITCHEN | TECHNOLOGY | TOOLS | TRUCKS | GREEN | MANAGEMENT

## Consistent comfort at the Norton Residence all summer long

BY BRIAN NELSON

OAK BLUFFS, MASS. — The Norton Residence is the most famous house on Martha's Vineyard. Built in 1891 by Philip Corbin, manufacturing tycoon, it was the most extravagant summer mansion in the town of Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard. After 100 years of neglect, it was bought in 1991 by Peter Norton, the computer soft-

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## Green growth in the arid West

SPECIAL to CONTRACTOR

BERMUDA DUNES, CALIF. — It's a common sight among plumbers in southern California: a five gallon bucket in the shower to catch water while waiting for heated water to arrive. Most homeowners are doing everything they can to conserve water. The sight of dead lawns, empty riverbeds and desiccated reservoirs haven't gone unnoticed.



Rob Ferraud, owner of Valley Plumbing, Inc.

"I was in a home to install a hot water recirculation system when I saw buckets scattered throughout the house at a number of water fixtures," said Rob Ferraud, owner of Valley Plumbing Inc., in

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## Customers do business with people not products

BY ROBERT P. MADER OF CONTRACTOR'S STAFF

HOLLYWOOD, FLA. — Steve Coscia was talking about the Halo Effect, but it was a lot easier to show devil horns at work. The property manager was looking out the window, waiting for the service tech to show up. When he does, he opens the door to the van and fast food trash tumbles out. He stubs out his cigarette in the parking lot. No angel there. Then



Steve Coscia.

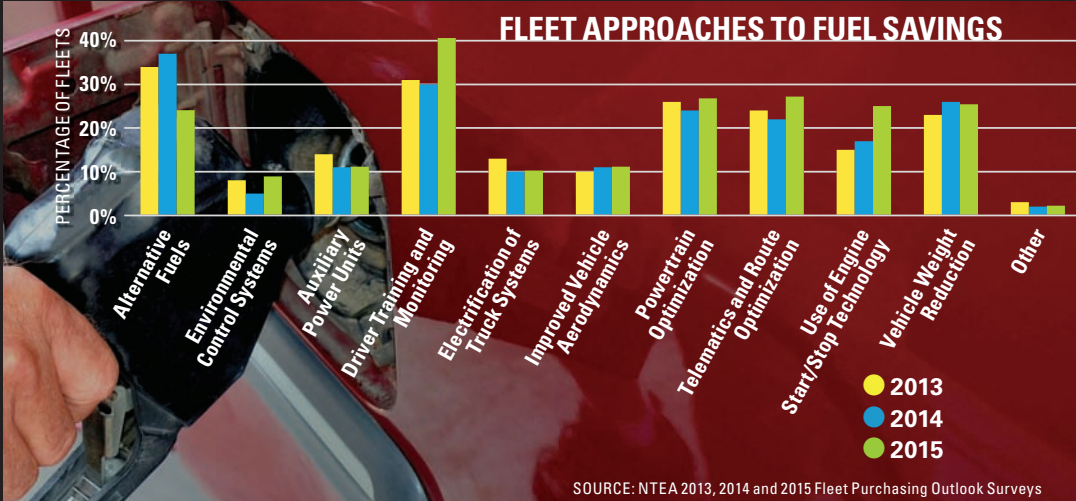
often seen in strip mall parking lots — the dashboard is filled with old mail, receipts, cigarette packs, fast food trash and parking tickets. No halo there either.

Coscia, one of the country's pre-eminent experts in customer service and soft skills for service contractors, explained how customers

view service providers at the Plumbing-Heat-

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### CONTRACTOR INFOCUS



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# Green growth in the arid West

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Bermuda Dunes, Calif., about 100 miles north of the Mexico border. “They collected the clean water while waiting for the stream to get hot. Then they’d use it to water plants.”

Californians have adapted by necessity. Lawn-painting services can quickly turn a brown yard into a healthy-looking landscape.

Some homeowners have resorted to placing a brick in their toilet tanks to save a liter per flush, and the state has begun covering what’s left of their reservoirs with floating plastic balls to reduce evaporation.

In the past year, the drought has become a concern in other states as well, though to a lesser degree.

Oregon, Washington and parts of Idaho, Montana and Nevada are getting dry, and raging wild fires are just one indication. Spring and summer rains in Colorado and Texas provided some relief, though concerns remain.

Nationwide, it’s elevated awareness to the cause of water conservation.

For Valley Plumbing Inc., the drought has helped grow one source of revenue. Installation of low-flow fixtures and hot water recirculation systems has taken off. It’s been a strong addition to their full-service, full-spectrum offering.

## Through lush times and dry

The family-owned company is 32 employees strong and hiring. His father started the firm in 1953 after returning from World War II, having served as a fighter pilot.

Today, Ferraud’s daughter is the company’s bookkeeper, his son is service manager, and his son-in-law is construction manager.

From the beginning, the firm has concentrated on service. That focus has flywheeled the firm through recessions. In times of economic plenty, new construction work was a shot in the arm. Recently, interest in water-conserving fixtures and accessories has driven growth.

“The drought has been a concern for nearly a decade, though it graduated to ‘crisis mode’ about two years ago,” explained Ferraud. “When it started looking dire, homeowners began calling about low-GPF toilets. Many aren’t



**Plumber John Mohammed installs a Taco Genie hot water recirculation system.**

aware of hot water recirculation, but given its effectiveness and affordability, it’s not a hard sell. A four-person household can save up to 12,000 gallons of fresh water each year.”

## Flexibility of installation

Today, nearly all of Valley’s new construction projects incorporate domestic hot water recirculation, and installations

in terms of installation,” said Ferraud. “Once we learned that Taco makes recirculation systems, we started installing them. We’ve been using standard Taco pumps on large hot water applications for decades.”

With a line of recirculation products from simple to smart, Taco also manufactures systems that are easy to install in homes with or without a dedicated

**‘We’ve been doing ‘recirc’ for 15 years, but interest has never been as high as it is now.’**

at existing homes have been on the rise. The company put in roughly 30 systems last year.

“We’ve been doing ‘recirc’ for 15 years, but interest has never been as high as it is now, and the products weren’t as flexible

recirc loop.

A recent installation had Valley plumbers installing a TacoGenie circulator in an existing structure without a return line.

The small, silent pump attaches to the

water lines at the most remote fixture in the home. When activated, the cool water is sent back to the water heater through the cold water line. As hot water arrives at the faucet, the pump shuts off.

In different applications, for example where a recirc line is present or where an electric outlet isn’t available, products like Taco’s SmartPlus or Hot-Link circulators provide a solution.

## Raising local awareness

“I think hot water recirculation has come of age,” said Ferraud. “You can only save so much water with low-flow toilets. Right now, any toilet sold in California must meet the EPA guideline of 1.28 GPF. As a plumber, I’m hoping we don’t see that number drop any further or we could see mainline blockage problems. We need to start looking at other water conservation options, with recirc being at the top of the list.”

Ferraud will voice his opinion as best he can. Valley Plumbing is a Five-Star member of the Palm Desert Chamber of Commerce. At their recent Business Expo, where nearly 15,000 attendees came through in a single day, the Valley Plumbing booth focused on water conservation.

“Recirculation was the center of our booth this year. We’ve installed recirculation systems for customers we’ve served for 50 years,” said Ferraud. “Hot water recirculation may be foreign to them, but we’ve earned their trust over the decades. Through the Business Expo and word-of-mouth, we’re looking to use this service offering to gain new clients and save the Coachella Valley a lot of clean water.” **G**

## A. O. Smith launches consumer financing program

ASHLAND CITY, TENN. — Water heater manufacturer A. O. Smith and its family of brands will introduce consumer financing designed to give plumbing contractors a competitive advantage.

A. O. Smith’s consumer financing program, through a partnership with the GreenSky Program, will enable contractors to offer more payment options to their customers. The program will be available to contractors

working with the A. O. Smith family of brands in 2016, according to David Chisolm, vice president of marketing for A. O. Smith.

“A. O. Smith is committed to equipping our contractors with a full suite of innovative and meaningful products as well as the tools that empower them to provide the right hot water solutions to their customers,” Chisolm said.

Through the GreenSky program,

participating A. O. Smith contractors can offer point-of-sale credit to their customers through mobile app, online or by phone. Customers will receive a credit decision within seconds.

“This unique and high caliber consumer finance program will help contractors mitigate cost concerns and puts the focus where it belongs: providing the right hot water solution for their customers,” Chisolm said. **G**