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SPOKANE, WASH. PROFILE

# GOLD SEAL MECHANICAL

## In it for the long haul



**T**he year 1967 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° — and in August, they sizzled with record highs of 99°, 15° higher than normal.

And as far as they can recall, Robert Sr. and Richard Dixon — the father/son team who 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 so-called “Swinging Sixties,” Robert and Richard were just a two-man shop, both working out of their own trucks while establishing credit at local supply houses. Customers? They had a few.

Today, Gold Seal — now celebrating its 50th year in business — has blossomed into one of the region’s largest plumbing and mechanical contracting firms. It employs more than 120 people, runs 40 trucks and routinely works 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.

In their steady economy, Gold Seal is a company that today sees 25% residential new installation work, 30% service work that mostly favors the commercial side of the business, and 45% new installation commercial work — a facet of the business that’s running at full tilt.

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 its outstanding customer service, well recognized in the area — with a healthy handful of customers who originally signed on in ‘69. Clearly, an edict still works: Getting the job done right the first time.

“We’ve done well maintaining the reputation and work ethic through the years, even as the company has grown way beyond our expectations,” says Robert Dixon (Richard’s son), estimator at Gold Seal.



The company's experienced journeymen plumbers are all trained to the highest level, licensed, insured, bonded and continue to take courses and certification tests to stay up to date on the latest technology evolving in the industry.

#### **Affinity for 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 miles from Gold Seal. Perched near the shores of Lake Coeur d'Alene, Affinity is an active-adult, 55+ independent living community with all the amenities that prides itself on its lively approach to keeping customers happily engaged: "At Affinity, something's going on at all times," said the facility's manager.

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.

**"Maintaining excellence in service isn't only a job performed for clients, it means providing excellent working conditions for our own employees."**

**— Richard Dixon**

"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," explains Mike VanDyke, Gold Seal commercial projects superintendent.

"Our 'recipe' for mechanical equipment — if you will — includes the best, most reliable equipment," VanDyke says. "Occasionally, customers demand equipment other than what we've 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, 100-gallon, 199,000 Btu eF water heaters to meet all of Affinity's domestic hot water needs.

"So we chose several separate water heaters for a modular approach, assuring redundancy," VanDyke says. "If a problem arose for one of the units, the others would most likely meet demand without challenge. But with the eFs — systems we frequently choose for commercial jobs because of their durability



Gold Seal Mechanical celebrates its 50th year of business this year. Dan Frisch Photography.

and great track record with us — we don't expect problems."

Gold Seal also installed Taco SmartPlus hot water recirculation pumps, assuring the residents wouldn't have to wait while hot water reaches the taps. 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.

Protecting the cleanliness of the large volume of domestic water at Affinity is a 6-inch stainless steel backflow assembly. VanDyke's team installed the "Silver Eagle" back flow at the facility to protect the purity of the domestic water.

"The backflow's placed in the mechanical room opposite the bank of Bradford White water heaters for easy access," says Affinity maintenance supervisor John Rodrigues. "Annual backflow testing is easy, and the assemblies are fully protected there."

"We were extremely pleased with the work Gold Seal did for us," adds the facility manager. "In fact, we keep using them to do the plumbing 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 hose bib used for cleaning off drain equipment.

These systems prevent scale by transforming dissolved hardness minerals into harmless, inactive microscopic crystal particles. These particles make their way through plumb-





Left: A Gold Seal technician works on an instantaneous water heater. A Watts OneFlow water treatment system protects the unit's heat exchanger from mineral deposits. Dan Frisch Photography.

ing 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," VanDyke says.

### Classy piece of history

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.

The Davenport, opened as a destination in its own right, offering palatial splendor and five-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

Below: A Gold Seal supervisor performs an annual maintenance check on one of many Bradford White eF water heaters at the Affinity independent living community. Dan Frisch Photography.



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 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 says.



GOLD SEAL MECHANICAL



A facility manager sets the function of an eF water heater installed by Gold Seal Mechanical. Dan Frisch Photography.

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 says. "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." **RJ**

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