

The Direct Connection



A newsletter dedicated to Cross Connection Control and Backflow Prevention www.abpa-sa.org

February Vol. 34 Issue 2

Cross Connection Control – Utilizing Testing Software to Enhance Program Enforcement

With this article we will focus on a few things about how Backflow Prevention Assembly Testing programs can control and utilize Software Tracking Programs to assist with Quality Control and Enforcement for the benefit of customers and the protection of the potable water system.

Backflow prevention assembly testing is actually one fifth of the entire Cross Connection Control Program. This portion of the program is very important and basically utilizes independent Backflow Prevention Testers from outside the Water Purveyor and/or Plumbing Inspection Department.

Backflow Prevention Assembly Testers become the “eyes and ears” of those enforcing the Cross Connection Control Program who rely heavily on testers and companies that employ testers, to provide detailed accurate information to enforcement on assemblies being tested. Enforcement can have issues with what is being reported on Test and Maintenance Report forms and necessary follow-up corrective actions as noted by testers. Additionally, routine periodic review of Test and Maintenance (T&M) Report forms being submitted is a must and software can be enhanced, in some instances, to assist with enforcement in assuring assemblies are actually being tested and not falsified. Hard Copy T&Ms submitted are continually reviewed by enforcement, unlike those submitted into a software program and can easily pick up on necessary corrective measures.

Monitoring Testing Ethics: Software Programs can be modified to assist enforcement with eliminating falsification issues. Those enforcing Cross Connection Control Programs have struggled with this falsifying issue forever, by both testers and company owners. Thankfully, this is not a common occurrence. However, this can be easily corrected through the software program with such things as the tester values being submitted. The software program could flag T&M's with the same values being submitted over time for follow up by enforcement to ensure tester is actually performing test and not falsifying the test. Another flag is testers passing or failing extremely high numbers of BFPA's. This is where an enforcement agency could review, with the tester, any number of things such as the Tester's Procedures – Accuracy of Gauge –Backflow preventer(s) issues in an area due to water quality issues.

Another flag - Number of backflow prevention assemblies being tested within a time period. A single tester, testing 20,000 assemblies a year, as an example, should be flagged by software to notify enforcement. The time backflow prevention assemblies are tested is another flag. As an example, testing 10 backflow prevention assemblies in 10 minutes.

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Gauge testing for members starts at 5:00 PM at SAWS

February – Meeting Details

Meetings of the San Antonio Chapter ABPA are held the second Thursday of every month except December. Dinner and refreshments are served at 6:00 p.m. sharp with the meeting starting at 6:15. The next meeting is:

Date: Thursday February 8, 2024

Time: 6:00 PM Pre-registration only required to receive a meal

**Loc: SAWS Bldg. 2 Conference Room
2800 US Hwy 281 North.**

Program: What You Need to Know to Make the Best Decision for Your Customer (the rest of the story) Joe Young

Meeting Sponsor: Envirotrax (VEPO)

**No alcoholic beverages
allowed**

Next Meeting: March 14, 2024

Big Thanks to

BAVCO for sponsoring the January meeting.

Joe Young with BAVCO for providing the training program.

BAVCO for donating the Insulating Bag and mechanical bleed valve to prevent backflow assemblies from freezing for the raffle.

February Agenda

- 5:00 p.m. General discussion and quorum confirmation
- 5:15 p.m. Call Meeting to order.
- 5:16 p.m. Secretary's Report. Read and approve the minutes of the previous meeting.
- 5:20 p.m. Treasurer's Report. Discussion and approval of the treasurer's report.
- 5:25 p.m. Supply Officer's Report
- 5:30 p.m. Vice President's, Directors', and any other reports for the good of the chapter. Comments, new business, any discussion.
- 5:40 p.m. Training Report. Training & Meal Sponsors
- 5:45 p.m. Webmaster Report
- 5:50 p.m. President's Report. New & old business
- 6:00 p.m. Meal is served.
- 6:15 p.m. General Membership Meeting & Training
 - 1. Report from the Directors Meeting. President
 - 2. City, regional, and national reports. James Cantrell and/or any City personnel present.
 - 3. Training program for the evening.
 - 4. Raffle prize drawing.

Ongoing Goals of ABPA-SA Chapter

- 1. Educational Outreach with public by presenting at PHCC meetings, engineering firms, schools, and neighborhood associations. Continuing goal.
- 2. Greater use of TCEQ website. Tracking of CEUs, Services available. Personal education.
- 3. Increase member awareness of importance of chapter meetings. Increase attendance and public awareness.
- 4. Increase website resource information. More detailed links to more information like TCEQ, COSA, and any place that would be helpful to our members

"Direct Talk" by the President

The February 8th meeting will be held in the SAWS conference room in the Tower II building located at 2800 U.S. Hwy. 281. **We will have a BOD meeting starting around 5:15 PM.** Gauge testing starts at 5:00 PM and is iffy after 5:30 PM. The meal will start at 6:00 PM and the meeting will start at 6:15 PM. You may attend the meeting **without** pre-registering, however, if you would like a meal, you will have to register via the email you will receive about 10 days before the meeting. We need some volunteers to man the booth at the SAWS Spring Bloom on March 9th. Stay safe.

Trinidad Chairez

Here is a good website for emergency information: www.sanantonio.gov/emergency/

Chapter Chatter

Greg Shean, Almost Tells It Like It Is, Chapter Secretary

PHCC Clay Shoot

The annual clay shoot will be held on Thursday, February 29th at the National Shooting Complex off Culebra just past 1604 (5931 Rof Rd, SATX, 78253). The chapter is sponsoring one of the six weapon raffle items. Never did a semi-automatic rifle (the media calls it an AR 15). The weapon can be exchanged at the gun shop for something else of equal or lesser value. Last year the chapter also sponsored four of the 16 shooting stations and the awards. Historically, there are anywhere from 35-45 door prizes. The proceeds support the PHCC-San Antonio Plumbing Apprenticeship Program which brings young people into the trade that someday may become plumbers/backflow testers. They hopefully become ABPA-SA members. The PHCC promotes ABPA-SA in a general sense to many different trades of business as a worthy cause of protecting our drinking water. We could not get better or more effective paid advertisement anywhere else. Cost of \$165 per shooter or \$600 per four-person team if registered by the Early Bird Deadline of Friday, February 9. After this, prices go up to \$200 per shooter or \$750 per four-person team. Any shooters in the Chapter? See Greg for details and Bruce for shooters. Not a shooter? You are still welcome to join us for the PHCC Industry lunch at 11:30am. Cost is \$30 per person. It's a "Florida scramble" start as all the shooters start at different stations so they are through at the same time – about 4:00 PM. The chapter is doing chorizo con queso which pairs very well with beer after shooting. This is what my wife and I do – 2 cans Rico's condensed #10 can cheese, 10 cans Rotel, 5# of my ground pork seasoned chorizo, and water to dilute in a 16-quart roaster oven. Round corn chips, sliced jalapenos, and salsa. Easy and delicious!

MINUTES SAN ANTONIO CHAPTER-ABPA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING Thursday, January 11, 2024

Trinidad Chairez, President, presided over the meeting. The ABPA San Antonio Chapter meeting started at 6:02 PM in the Tower 2 Conference Room at SAWS HQ.

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS – PRESENT	EXECUTIVE OFFICERS – ABSENT
Trinidad Chairez – President	
Jeff Stricker– Vice President	
Greg Shean – Secretary	
Art Trejo – Treasurer	
Keith Waldrep – Past President	

OFFICERS SPECIAL TO THE CHAPTER – PRESENT	OFFICERS SPECIAL TO THE CHAPTER – ABSENT
Carl Michaud – Gauge Testing/Certification	Supply Officer - Vacant
Bill Hamrick – Membership and Newsletter	Jim Cantrell – Liaison to SAWS
Joe Young – Program Director	Jeff Meeks – Sgt. At Arms
	Matthew Wilgen – Webmaster

DIRECTORS AT LARGE – PRESENT	DIRECTORS AT LARGE – ABSENT
Bruce Rathburn – 2 years	Jeff Hoffman – 2 years
Fred Baird – 1 year	
Robert Stricker – 2 years	
Bob Clark - 1 year	
Meeting Sponsor: BAVCO - Joe Young Midwest BAVCO Representative	

Agenda Item #1. President's Report: Trinidad started the meeting at 6:02 and then asked for a moment of silence. He then went through the November agenda items. Robert thanked the chapter for flowers for wife's funeral. INFO.

Agenda Item #2. Secretary's Report: Minutes were in the newsletter. Fred made a motion to accept. Seconded. Passed. INFO.

Agenda Item #3. Treasurer's Report: Art reported the amount in our checking account. Robert made a motion to accept. Second. Passed. INFO.

Agenda Item #4. Supply Officer's Report: Vacant – still need a volunteer. Trini asked for a volunteer. No takers. It was suggested that the office remain vacant until Troy completes his APBA Presidential duties. Troy jokingly did not like that idea as he had it for over 25 years before becoming deeply involved in the National ABPA. INFO

Agenda Item #5. Meeting Sponsor: BAVCO sponsored the meeting. INFO.

Agenda Item #6. Meal: BAVCO sponsored the meal of Firehouse turkey, beef, and ham subs with a pickle, potato chips, and a cookie. Art Trejo provided the water and sodas for the meeting. INFO.

Agenda Item #7. Raffle: BAVCO provided a backflow insulation bag and a freeze protection valve for the raffle. INFO.

Agenda Item #8. Webmaster. No report. INFO.

Agenda Item #9. SAWS: Dan Crowley, SAWS Director-Government Relation, Regional and Federal Affairs, which includes the Backflow Section, reported the "good news" is that there is now 70% compliance for high hazard backflow testing. This is the highest it has ever been. The "bad news" is we need to do better than 70% for the entire year. Emilie Prado passed out the January 2024 newsletter outlining the changes in their backflow processing procedures. SAWS' customers, which are not in compliance, have not been removed from their billing account. Their water service has not yet been interrupted. They did receive a non-compliance fee on their water bill. The push is to "Educate before you regulate. Shutting off service is not the objective". INFO.

Agenda Item #10. San Antonio Irrigation Association (SAIA): Keith, now SAIA President, confirmed that their monthly meeting would now be held in the SAWS conference room. The cost is still \$25 to attend and receive the two training CEUs. Art Trejo, now the SAIA Treasurer, will provide a food truck meal instead of box meals. The cost will be \$14 per meal and will be paid by the meeting sponsor. INFO.

Agenda Item #11. ABPA National: The next annual conference will be in Charlotte from April 22-24th, 2024. Troy said that the ABPA is working on their website and should be done by April. It will have a

“better look” with mobile versions. Members will be asked for a password only when renewing. The ABPA will be publishing a training manual later this year. This will culminate many years, of a few members, working on it. Troy said he, Bruce, and Keith plan to attend the Conference. He said that there would be an Apollo factory tour on the previous Friday, April 19th. The factory is only 30 minutes away. An attendee can qualify for up to TCEQ approved 15 CEUs and 7.5 CEUs if attending virtually. Bill said that, although the CEUs would qualify for TCEQ credit, members would still need to attend at least 5 ABPA-SA meetings per year to qualify for the free Hands-on. INFO.

Agenda Item #12. SAWS Spring Bloom: Spring Bloom will be held on March 9th at SAWS. We need some volunteers if the Chapter wants a booth. INFO.

Agenda Item #13. City of San Antonio (COSA) Plumbing Inspection: Mike Morales, COSA Plumbing Inspections, thanked everyone for their help to improve the Test & Maintenance (T&M) process. Contractors and testers are uploading T&Ms. Mike has not heard of any glitches. The T&M must be attached to the inspection report. No inspection – no T&M. Bruce said when he was the SAWS Backflow Section Supervisor that COSA inspectors and staff would meet with his SAWS personnel and field inspectors. Robert, a former Chief COSA Plumbing Inspector, said that these meetings should be conducted quarterly. INFO.

Agenda Item #14. Membership: Bill reported that we have 88 members. Two memberships would be expiring at the end of the month. A couple expired the last couple months. Go to the abpa.org website to join or renew. Bill said our treasurer had taken renewal checks in the past but that became less convenient than paying on-line. Bill welcomed Martin Garcia, a SA airport plumbing inspector back into our membership. INFO.

Agenda Item #15. Gauge Testing: Carl reported that five gauges were tested this month. One potable and one non-portable gauge can be tested for free per year. Extra gauges cost \$45 which is still a bargain. INFO.

Agenda Item #17. Training: Joe Young, BAVCO Midwest Representative who works out of their San Antonio office. The presentation title was: Backflow ID – A Presentation on What You Need to Know to Make the Best Decision for Your Customer. He gave a repair perspective based on his experience as a backflow assembly and parts distributor. A severe cold is coming next week. Joe showed a green backflow insulating bag. It is not effective in all long term situations; severe cold requires a heat source. Bags have different R ratings. This one has an R-12 value. Higher values mean better insulation. Another freeze prevention device is a freeze protection valve, installed in an upside-down position on TC#4 to create a slow flow of water through the assembly.

Joe did not immediately start his Power Point presentation, but went through some interesting and helpful facts. He said Watts owns FEBCO, Ames and Conbraco-Apollo. Zurn owns Wilkins. He showed slides of several old backflow assemblies that are still in service after 30 years. The inspector has the final say on lead or non-lead applications. He questioned: which backflow is the safest? He defended that the air gap was the safest. PVB and RP are for high hazard. Watts ID 909 4” is problematic and best to change out if repairs are necessary. Check the Watts 909 spring and take a picture to determine type. Check the factory specification sheets on their website. Be careful with fire lines if you don’t have a fire line license. Stainless steel backflow assemblies can have a factory weld problem as welding stainless steel is difficult. It is now less expensive to buy a repair kit than individual parts. Joe said you might have to buy a kit to get one particular part. Save the rest of the kit for your parts inventory. Buy the double check repair kit if you do not need a relief valve part. Manufacturers are stock traded companies so they benefit more by selling assemblies rather than repair parts. Wilkins no longer sells repair parts for large assemblies. The same is true for assemblies used in irrigation.

All manufacturers are favoring stainless steel. An N pattern assembly is needed if the installation is vertical and the assembly is not USC approved for vertical. Bruce said that a Wilkins 375 kept blowing at a hotel because of a high pressure which was higher than its rated 120 psi. Higher temperatures also cause failures. It is easier to replace an assembly than modify it and run it back through USC for approval.

Wilkins can build a stainless-steel extension to replace the Watts 909. Extensions are commonly done.

Joe knows what is coming from the manufacturers. Assemblies are getting more and more modern. Buy America means the backflow assemblies are only assembled in America. Buy American means that the backflow assembly is actually made and assembled in America. There is no such thing as Buy American in America.

Conbraco-Apollo 4 and 4a are common assemblies. Their parts are not interchangeable. Model, size and type in model number are necessary for parts. 4S models are for fire line. Joe compared different sizes of different manufacturers.

ARI backflow assemblies are the least expensive in the US. All are USC approved. They are not as common as the five US manufactures. ARI is made in Israel and is similar in design to the Watts 007/009. Their backflow assemblies are all-plastic. The company has a strong international presence, with sales units located in Spain, Italy, France, Germany, China, India, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina.

The tester must understand not only what they are seeing, but the best route to take if the assembly has failed. The assembly must also be installed in the correct configuration as intended, meeting all TCEQ and plumbing code requirements. All assemblies have pros and cons. No one brand should be targeted as better quality. The big five manufacturers have the same approval standards. The presentation showed backflow assemblies that are the same across the major manufacturers – FEBCO, Watts, Wilkins, and Apollo. These are “private label agreements” and have interchangeable parts. All manufacturers offer private label opportunities. It is important to know which version of which assembly you have. Joe gave several private label examples.

Joe showed four situations of failed backflows. He described how to address them. One RP had a frozen RP sensing line, one had inadequate RP pit drainage, one was a 40-year-old never tested assembly, and one was a total RP relief valve dump. He showed how to address these problems. All assemblies must have USC approval, backing of a big manufacture, and TCEQ approval. Joe brought up the USC specification sheet website link and gave examples from the website. You must have the tag information to help identify the backflow.

He went through the five main manufacturers. He showed the internet link for factory repair information for each manufacturer. Joe also had pictures of the backflow assemblies for each of the manufacturers. Joe showed crossover substitutes whose parts are the same, except for the tag.

FEBCO backflow assemblies are common in the irrigation industry. Small 850/860 models are very popular locally. The large 860/880 models are either lead free or leaded and have completely different parts. Epoxy coated large model relief valves are lead free. For larger assemblies, it is extremely important to know if the assembly is lead free or not. The parts are not interchangeable.

The Wilkins smaller sizes utilize a polymer body with brass ball valves. The 975/950 smaller sizes all are brass with “T” top entry version for 950. The larger sizes 975/950 sizes are no longer made. The larger sizes 375/350 vary between stainless and epoxy coated ductile iron. The 575/550 is no longer made. The 475/450 is available with N pattern for the 375/350. Model identification is critical but easily identified with visual clues such as the gate valve connection, installation pattern, and body material.

Buying parts can get you “into the weeds”. Consider purchasing parts kits with all the parts for an assembly which is considerably less expensive than individual parts due to manufacture inventory, labor, and accounting. Replace whole assembly as it was tested at the factory. Replacing parts puts the liability on the tester. Individual parts take more time and risk. If you are unsure about taking apart to see what’s wrong – replace it.

He then discussed the factors to repair or replace the assembly. Factors such as: Age, Condition, Rust, Service, Price, and Time.

The members who have a lot of repair experience shared their experiences and had a lot of technical repair questions for Joe and the membership.

Adjournment. Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8 PM for the raffle.



Greg Shean - Secretary ABPA San Antonio Chapter



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**MEMBER MEETING
C OF SA DSD OUTLOOK**
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11:00 AM | 1:00 PM



2024 Full Calendar

**29TH
FEB**

SPORTING CLAY TOURNAMENT
NATIONAL SHOOTING COMPLEX
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11:30 AM LUNCH | 1:00 PM SHOOT BEGINS

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Enforcement Software Review and Notification: How is the software program established? Can anyone submit the T&M or does the tester have to submit it?

Many companies employing testers will treat backflow testing as any other work order. That is, once the job is completed, someone in the office will finalize and submit an invoice and the T&M paperwork. We have seen this create issues with falsifications of Test and Maintenance Report forms. Software could be developed or modified to have the tester actually signing each T&M submitted. Question - Electronic signatures, who is really signing? Some software programs require only a one-time electronic signature at time tester registers with the local enforcement agency. This leads to falsifying T&M's or data submitted by other than the tester. These are just a few things that enforcement could review with their Backflow Prevention Assembly Testing software program. Enforcement agencies should be reviewing and possibly requiring various things as mentioned above to ensure the integrity of their testing program. Think there are many more ideas local enforcement agencies have used and can think of for future quality control of their testing program. *Basically - Enforcement controls software - software programs do not control the backflow testing program.*

Blind Note: Additionally, enforcement may consider an annual notification of testers and company owners employing testers, of their responsibility and liability involved with Cross Connection Control and backflow prevention assembly testing. This could include a required signed statement to that affect.

Fred Baird (f.baird@att.net) – Involved in developing and enforcing San Antonio Water System's Cross Connection Control Program in the early 1970's. Enforced program for approximately 30 years before retiring. Currently co-owner of Bac-Flo Unlimited, Inc.

NEED TO KNOW INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the ABPA-SA Chapter has many benefits available to those members who participate. The most valuable benefit is the "Free Hands-on 8 hour class" donated annually by BAC-FLO Unlimited, Inc. to each member who attends a minimum of five (5) meetings per year. Another benefit is earning the TCEQ required CEUs for renewing your BPAT License, in addition to certification of your potable backflow test gauge and your non-potable gauge, if you have one, each year. Members will also receive a meal at each meeting. This is one of the best deals available today for only \$125 per year, \$65 for National ABPA and \$60 for our ABPA-SA Chapter.



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3. Robert Stricker

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4. Fred Baird
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How to join the ABPA-SA Chapter

There are two ways to join the San Antonio Chapter of the American Backflow Prevention Association.

The easiest way is to click on the QR Code and follow the instructions to set up your account and be presented with an invoice that you can pay with a credit card on-line or check the box to pay with a check. If you don't use QR Codes, click on this address. <https://www.abpa.org/page/Join> **IMPORTANT** Be sure to select the chapter/s (San Antonio Chapter) you want to join before selecting the payment method. If you elect to pay with a check, you will be able to print the invoice so you can send it with your check to the address on the invoice. If you pay with a credit card on-line, you will be able to print a receipt.

Click QR Code to Join



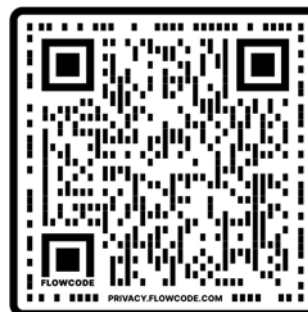
The other way is to print the Membership Application on the next page and send it to the address at the bottom of the page with your check.

How to renew your ABPA-SA Chapter Membership

There are two ways to renew your San Antonio Chapter membership of the American Backflow Prevention Association.

The easiest way is to click on the QR Code and follow the instructions to renew your membership and sign into your account and follow the instructions. If you don't use QR Codes, click on this address. <https://www.abpa.org/page/RenewNow> The program will present you with an invoice that you can pay with a credit card on-line or check the box to pay with a check. **IMPORTANT** Be sure the chapter/s (San Antonio Chapter) is/are selected that you want to renew before selecting the payment method. If you elect to pay with a check, you will be able to print the invoice so you can send it with your check to the address on the invoice. If you pay with a credit card on-line, you will be able to print a receipt.

Click QR Code to Renew



The other way is to print the Membership Application on the next page and send it to the address at the bottom of the page with your check.

Thank You for Your Membership



APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

To join the American Backflow Prevention Association, simply fill out the membership application form and mail it with your check to the address listed below, or if paying by credit card you may fax the completed form to 979.846.7607. Local chapters have additional fees. Below is a listing of chapters by region. To find out if there is a local chapter in your area, please review the chapter information on our website at abpa.org or call the National Office at 979.846.7606. **Membership in the Association constitutes paying National dues.**

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- Must be a company or organization
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- A Sustaining Member must submit a letter that designates their Voting Representative.

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ABPA-SA		\$ 60.00	
Local Chapter (if joining a local chapter)		Local Dues Amount	

Method of Payment

☐ Charge \$ 125.00 to my ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express ☐ Discover ☐ Check ☐ Money Order ☐ Invoice Me

Credit Card Number	Card Expires (MM/YYYY)	CVC Number
Name as it appears on card	Signature	

Additional Information

How would you like to receive your Membership Renewal Invoice Notification? ☐ Email ☐ US Mail (Not available for International Membership)

Local Chapter Dues Listed by Region

REGION 1 New England \$12.00 Rhode Island 18.00	REGION 5 Colorado \$15.00 Utah 12.00	REGION 9 (USD)
REGION 2 Virginia \$25.00	REGION 6 Arizona \$20.00 Central Coast 10.00 Central Valley California 10.00 Hawaii 23.00 Silver State 23.00 Southern California 15.00	REGION 10
REGION 3 Carolinas \$10.00 Florida Suncoast 12.00 Peach State "1788" 30.00 Tennessee 20.00	REGION 7 Oregon \$20.00 SRC4 20.00	REGION 11 Indiana BPA \$25.00 Michigan 40.00 Northern Illinois 23.00
REGION 4 Arkansas \$10.00 Central Texas 20.00 Corpus Christi 23.00 Lower Rio Grande Valley 25.00 North Texas 23.00 San Antonio 60.00	REGION 8 (USD)	REGION 12 Eastern Nebraska \$10.00

Please make checks payable to: ABPA
6672 S 1570 W, West Jordan, UT
(801) 436-7238
Email: membership@abpa.org