



# Marine Chemist Association, Inc.

76 Farmholme Road ■ Stonington, CT. 06378  
■ dvraff@comcast.net

**November 2023**



## **Marine Chemist Association Newsletter**

The Marine Chemist Association held a Board of Directors (BOD) meeting October 8<sup>th</sup> at MITAGS in Baltimore, MD. This was preceded by a sectional seminar. The topic of the sectional seminar was the standard safety designation of Safe for Limited Hot Work. Information on the seminar, board meeting and general information follow.

The presentation on Limited Hot Work was the third sectional seminar on this topic finally. The Board is returning to its schedule to provide two sectional seminars per year on one topic as in the past. We are catching up after the pandemic changes. Our next sectional seminar will be in Houston. More information on this will be provided later in the newsletter.

There were 10 chemists in attendance along with three trainers and one GFE. The turnout was better than expected although still below average. The Board is hoping that as we move away from Covid attendance will increase.

It has been many years since the Association held a meeting at MITAGS (Marine Institute for Training and Graduate Studies) and it turned out to be very convenient and the venue was very accommodating to the Association. The property is located close to the airport and runs a shuttle. Meals are included in the room price and the classrooms were up to date. The Association may consider returning to the property in the future for either meetings or sectional seminars.

The seminar at MITAGS went very well with multiple questions to the presenters. Additionally, the final open session remains popular to ask specific questions on any topic. All of the presentations are available to members to access on the website. The Board reaffirmed its stance of continuing to hold in-person meetings versus virtual meetings. The benefits of both methods were discussed and the Board believes that the in-person interactions provide a better experience for all involved.

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The agenda for the fall sectional seminar was.

Roll Call

Safe for Limited Hot Work

History of the SSD and SFLHW designations

Cleaning and Inspection Practices for SFLHW

What should be on a SFLHW Certificate?

Certificate writing exercise SFLHW

Open Discussion for Chemists



**MITAGS Campus**

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## **Your Board of Directors (BOD)**

- i. Executive Committee (BOD)
  - i. Phil Giles, Chairman, Term expires 7/24
  - ii. Michael Schmidt, Past Chairman, Term expires 7/24
  - iii. Geoffery Jenny, Chairman Elect, Term expires 7/24
  - iv. Donald Raffo, Secretary/Treasurer (Serves at pleasure of Board)
- ii. Board of Directors (BOD)
  - i. Robert Albert, Atlantic, Term expires 7/25
  - ii. Brent Campbell, Atlantic, Term expires 7/24
  - iii. Jeff Hanson, Pacific, Term expires 7/25
  - iv. Lucas Kuebler, Pacific, Term expires 7/24
  - v. Gary Snell, Gulf, Term expires 7/25
  - vi. Brian Axelrad, Gulf, Term expires 7/24
- iii. New Sectional Alternate Directors (Terms start at the October 2024 meeting)
  - i. Pacific alternate, Kayla Aird
  - ii. Gulf/Inland alternate, Eric Moore followed by Rick Thompson
  - iii. Atlantic alternate, Mark Bruff

## **NFPA 306**

Don Raffo will chair a committee of Association member volunteers to reformat 306 in line with PI 34 and 41 and 45. The rewrite will not introduce any new requirements to the standard but will just be a reformat of the requirements of the 2024 edition. The motion was unanimously passed at the October meeting. A request for members to participate in this effort resulted in no volunteers other than BOD member L. Kuebler. This input will be for the 2029 edition. The closing date is June 3, 2026 for initial public input for the next edition.

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The BOD will solicit a new group to consolidate updates to the next edition of 306. This will be a work in progress over the next few years. A request was put out in the newsletter and no volunteers have come forward. Don Raffo and Brian Axelrad will head up the committee. B. Albert, J. Hanson and L. Kuebler volunteered for the committee.

## **MCQB Report**

The Executive Board of the MCA met with the MCQB following the annual seminar. The main issue the MCQB raised was that some chemists seem to be using a VOC or PID reading as a benzene reading. The general consensus was that a benzene reading must be taken with a compound specific instrument or detector tube. This was discussed and the board also believed that a compound specific or detector tube must be used to determine benzene levels in gasoline. Please be sure that you are using the correct instrumentation to measure specific compounds.

A discussion was held on how chemists would be able to test for benzene if the new ACGIH benzene level changes. There was no final consensus since the value was so low that there is currently no easy way to measure for it.

The MCA asked the MCQB for training topic suggestions and discussed ways to have a better line of communication with the board. This was a general discussion and no definitive path was determined.

## **NFPA Report**

There are currently twenty-four trainees in the program, three new individuals registered in 2023. Three applications for certification are currently with MCQB.

Two foreign candidates have applied to register in the NFPA training program and the review process has begun within the NFPA. Eighteen recertifications have been done to date with four more to go in 2023. John Flynn and Chris Scott have both retired. Chris applied and has become the second Marine Chemist Emeritus.

It was reported that 23,063 certs have been issued with 75% of chemists reporting as of the meeting date. Hopefully by the end of the year there may be about 33,000 certificates issued, which is about the number needed to fully fund the program.

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The 2024 edition of 306 is out and now must be followed. There may be a broad review of all certificates in the near future.

## **New Chemist**

Andrew Hall, a previous associate member was recently certified by the MCQB and he is our newest chemist, #745. He is now a full member with the following contact information. Congratulations to Andrew.

### **Andrew Hall CMC 745**

MarChem Inspections, LLC

P.O. Box 3191

Bellaire, Texas 77401

United States

(757) 871-7484

[andrew.hall@marcheminspections.com](mailto:andrew.hall@marcheminspections.com)

## **2024 Spring Sectional Seminar**

The spring sectional seminar will be held at the;

Houston Airport Marriott at George Bush Intercontinental

18700 John F Kennedy Blvd | Houston, TX 77032

The seminar will be on March 16 with a BOD meeting being held on the 17<sup>th</sup>. To register for the seminar and book a room please go to our website where you can do both. Please only book a room through this site as the MCA must meet a minimum room number or pay for excess rooms. This applies to the BOD also.

The theme of the seminar will be;

Pipelines and Hollow Structures and Hot Work. The draft agenda follows:

Welcome 0800

Business outline 0800-0900

How to Prepare Pipelines and Hollow Structures for Hot Work. Clean or Inert? 0915-1030.

How to inspect Pipelines/Hollow Structures and Confined Spaces they may be in? 1045-1145

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How to write a certificate for Pipelines/Hollow structures and Confined Spaces and what must be on the Certificate as outlined in 306? 1300-1400  
Certificate Critique Exercise 1400-1430  
Open discussion 1430-end.

The goal of the sectional seminars is to provide information as to what is required in NFPA 306 so those attending will have the required information. None of the presentations are a mandate on what each chemist has to do. Each inspection is different and the goal is to provide information so each person has a good understanding on the minimum requirements of 306 and information to do a complete inspection including how to write a certificate.

## **2024 Annual Seminar Incentive Information**

There will be another incentive to attend the 2024 annual seminar in Denver. However, this year it will be distributed differently. At the request of the MGHCP, a line-item submission for the incentive will be \$25,000. This will be split up to cover seminar and hotel costs between chemists attending the seminar. Last year almost \$24,000 was distributed. However, not all chemists applied for the reimbursement which was \$1000 per chemist. While it is expected that the amount will be about the same in 2024, it will depend on the number of chemists attending as it may be more or it may be less. The BOD did vote to end incentive payments 90 days past the seminar closing date. (This means you must submit the required information within 90 days after the seminar concludes to be eligible for reimbursement)

## **2024 Annual Seminar**

Denver, CO. will be the site of the 2024 annual seminar from July 8-10 with the BOD meeting being held on the 7th. The location will be the Denver Sheraton Downtown Hotel, 1550 Court Place, Denver, CO.

More information will be presented as we get closer and the ability to book a room along with registering for the seminar will be posted on the website. Please make all reservations via the website.

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## **2024 Budget Request**

The Board will begin working on the 2024 budget request to the MGHCP/MGHCF at the end of December.

## **Member Requests**

The BOD reviewed two requests from members. A summary follows;

The board discussed virtual vs in-person shipyard competent person (SCP) training and a request made by a member to provide a recommendation to NAVSEA that the initial SCP course only be allowed to be held in-person (not virtual).

This information was sent out to membership and several members thought that this recommendation was not within the mission statement of the MCA. The MCA consulted our attorney and the decision from a legal aspect was that this type of recommendation did fall within the scope of the MCA mission.

However, the BOD voted to not make any recommendation to NAVSEA on the type of competent person training it permits. A BOD member noted that any person can make a recommendation, on anything, to NAVSEA for consideration. The BOD believed that it was better for individual members to provide comments and not the Association.

The second request by a member was for the MCA to join NFPA link to allow all members to obtain access to NFPA standards. The Board believed that the cost to do this was excessive. It was estimated at about \$5000.00 per year.

## **Fraudulent Certificates**

Larry Russell stated that he was presented with a copy of a Marine Chemist Certificate which appeared to be fraudulent and was issued by a person who was not a certified Marine Chemist. Larry reminds everyone to contact him on any issue like this.



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## **Seminar and Meeting Dress Code and Information**

The BOD reminds you that we are a professional organization and all members are expected to dress properly during meetings. Business casual dress is required at all seminars and BOD meetings. Additionally, when coming before any Board you are reminded to dress professionally and use appropriate language. This is especially true when going before the MCQB.

The insurance fund reminds every chemist that if appearing before the MCQB for any type of a review you are permitted and encouraged to bring counsel, documentation, or any information to make your case. The MCQB also encourages this practice.

## **BOD and Correspondence**

As a reminder any emails, letters or other correspondence to the BOD becomes the official business of the MCA and may be included in the correspondence section of the minutes.

## **Marine Chemist Physical Ability to Perform Duties**

NPFA sends the following reminder to Chemists who may not be able to perform their work due to a temporary physical limitation.

The NPFA Marine Field Service wishes to remind all Marine Chemists, the *Rules for the Certification and Recertification of Marine Chemists*, as amended 01 September 2023, *Section II. Qualifications – General, Paragraph A*, requires all Marine Chemists to “*be of an maintain good character, and physically able to perform the duties of a Marine Chemist*”. In the event that a Marine Chemist is unable to physically perform his or her duties due to injury or illness; the Marine Chemist should be examined by a licensed physician and obtain a statement attesting to the Chemist's physical ability to perform the duties of a Marine Chemist. The *General Medical Examination Form* (Form No. CMC-MD-01) may be used for this purpose

## **Ethics**

Past chair Michael Schmidt (Ethics Committee Chair) reported that there are no ethics issues before the board.

## **Website**

The MCA website ([www.marinechemistassociation.com](http://www.marinechemistassociation.com)) has undergone an overhaul. If you have any issues contact Don Raffo or the support email below. To access the website, you must log in with your password. Once that is done you will be automatically logged in after that. If you have problems logging in, please contact the webmaster at: [support@marinechemistassociation.com](mailto:support@marinechemistassociation.com).

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One of the changes is the ability for more control over your account, information, and membership. You now can change your personal information on the website and no longer need to contact me or the web person. It can be accomplished by going to the My Dashboard section (located in the upper right of the home page) and making the changes. It will then appear on the site.

All information on seminar attendance can be found in the My Dashboard section of our website. Note that you must click on the year tab at the bottom of the spreadsheet to view by year. If you attended a seminar and have a question on attendance, please contact D. Raffo. If you recently attended a seminar, please verify that the information is correct. A screenshot follows;

[FIND A CHEMIST](#)   [ABOUT ▼](#)   [EVENTS](#)   [NEWS](#)

## MY DASHBOARD



### MCA Forums Test

Get the latest updates and collaborate with other Marine Chemists.

[VISIT FORUMS ↻](#)



### Seminar Attendance

The official attendance sheet for chemists looking to renew their license.

[SEE ATTENDANCE 📅](#)

The forum is now the primary way for communication with members. Information for chemists is posted on the website. Failure to sign up for the Forum indicates consent to not receive meeting notifications.

Only members may view the forum section. It is an area where news and technical discussions may be posted. If you are registered, you will get a text message and/or email whenever there is new information. Information on seminars, newsletters, events or general information also can be found on the site. If you have not registered you must enter the site to obtain the latest news and posts. We encourage all chemists to join the forum and obtain notifications.

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Additionally, all billing and seminar registration is on the website. You may also book a room via the website to attend a seminar.

## **Upcoming Committee Vacancies**

An election is currently underway for the MCA alternate representative to the MCQB. Please take a minute to vote on this important position as this is the only member elected position to a committee for the MCA.

The MCA is also looking for a new Chairman Elect. If you are interested in serving the MCA please contact Michael Schmidt ([marinechemist642@aol.com](mailto:marinechemist642@aol.com)) for information. Normally, the MCA looks for someone who has served on the BOD or some MCA board and has some general experience on how the MCA works. To be on a ballot, the following information is from our by-laws.

## **Article 9. Nominations for Chairman-Elect.**

The Past Chairman shall be responsible for overseeing the nomination and election process for the Chairman-elect. The Past Chairman shall seek other Members to assist in such process as is deemed necessary.

1. There shall be a sixty (60) day window for nominations for Chairman-elect prior to voting. The nomination period shall start on or about November 1st prior to an election year. On about January 1st of the year in which a new Chairman-elect is to be elected voting will begin and shall be completed by approximately March 1st. The Chairman-elect will begin his term during the annual meeting.
2. A candidate for Chairman-elect shall submit a letter to the Past Chairman, during the nomination period containing biographical information on the candidate's qualifications, and stating that the candidate is willing to serve for two (2) years as Chairman-elect and then two years as Chairman and two years as Past Chairman.
3. The Past Chairman shall compile and submit to the Secretary-Treasurer a list of those Members seeking election as Chairman-elect. Nominees will be listed alphabetically.
4. If there are at least two (2) candidates, voting shall occur in person and/or by ballot.
5. In the event of a tie or only one candidate, the Board will determine the Chairman-elect, who shall begin his or her service during the Annual Meeting.



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## **Outreach**

The MCA continues its efforts at outreach as we believe it is a valuable way to get the message out on using a Chemist as a resource in the maritime environment. If anyone knows of an event where we can spread the word on what we do to a group, please let Don Raffo know so the MCA can see if we can support it. Don Raffo gave a presentation on November 11<sup>th</sup> to the International Association of Marine Surveyors on the benefits of using a Marine Chemist. About 45 members attended and the presentation generated many questions and awareness of what services chemists provide.

## **MCA Committee Appointments**

The following individuals represent the MCA on various committees. This is for general information.

### **Control of Gas Hazards - NFPA 306.** (Appointed Positions by BOD)

Greg Grondin, principal, Jim Bruff alternate

John Bell, principal, John Edgar, alternate

### **Hot Work Operations – NFPA 51B.** (Appointed Positions by BOD)

Greg Grondin principal

Robbie Walker, alternate

### **Tank Leakage and Repair Safeguards - NFPA 326 & NFPA 329.** (Appointed Positions by BOD)

Brian Axelrad, principal

Vince Pempeit, alternate

### **NFPA 350 Guide for Safe Work in Industry Confined Spaces** (Appointed Positions by BOD)

Robbie Walker, principal

Vince Pempeit, alternate

### **MCQB** (Voted in by membership)

John Ward, principal (will be leaving after a 6-year term)

Brian Axelrad, alternate (will move to principal)

Election in process to obtain a new alternate.

### **Marine Field Service Advisory Committee** (Appointed Positions by BOD)

Donald Raffo

Chairman elect (changes but currently Geoff Jenny)

### **SSRAC** (Volunteers)

John Ward, principal

Robbie Walker, alternate

### **MACOSH** (Appointed by BOD)

Donald Raffo

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## **Code of Conduct for Meetings**

During any official MCA meeting there should be no discussion of personal matters, private disputes, or business pricing. Discussion should be limited to technical matters and the business of running the MCA.

## **Facebook Page**

For those of you who are on Facebook, visit Friends of Marine Chemist Association. It is a closed group and only chemists, spouses and friends may view and post on the page. If you'd like to access the page, send a friend request to the group. We encourage all to post information, photos, comments or anything else related to our profession, seminars, and events. Please check it out. It proved very popular when posting information about our annual seminar. Please consider sharing some on-the-job photos with the group.

## **Conclusion**

If you have any comments, thoughts or ideas on any aspect of the MCA please submit them to me and I will present them to the BOD for consideration. Be safe all.

Respectfully submitted,  
Don Raffo  
Secretary/Treasurer MCA

**Any opinions, policies or statements expressed in this newsletter are the personal opinion of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policy of the MCA.**