



## FACILITY MANAGEMENT SUSTAINING COMFORT SOLUTIONS

Welcome to the second issue of Mitsubishi Electric's *Facility Management* E-Newsletter – the biannual digital publication that brings you the latest developments and perspectives on using HVAC systems in commercial buildings. This issue focuses on multifamily facility management. Explore multifamily's trends, HVAC solutions and advancements below. [Share this issue with a friend.](#)

### Interview With a Facility Manager: Olan Thibodeaux, St. Charles College



The **Jesuit Spirituality Center at St. Charles College** (St. Charles College), Grand Coteau, Louisiana, houses The Pavilion – a 22-bed assisted living facility – in addition to a novitiate (Jesuit training center) and a spirituality center for retreats. Olan Thibodeaux has served as St. Charles College's maintenance manager for 36 years, and is responsible for directing operations and a small crew.

#### How did you get into the world of maintenance management?

I grew up in a family that was in the refrigeration business. That led into management. At some point, St. Charles College was looking for maintenance personnel. Back then air conditioning was one of their biggest headaches, as you can imagine would be true down south. I was asked to join because of my background, and eventually became the head of the department. Along the way I learned more about plumbing and appliance repair. So it was kind of like stumbling into it.

#### What hats do you wear as a maintenance manager? How big of a role does HVAC operation play in your job, and in your daily work?

We have a very small crew here: It's a 37-year-old, an 83-year-old and me. We operate and repair appliances, plumbing and HVAC. The small size of the crew means that whatever comes up, we handle it directly. It used to be that if I didn't know how to do something, I looked it up in a book. Now I go online.

HVAC used to take up more of our time. Previously, I had something like 100 window units to take care of. Those just don't have a good lifespan. **With our new [Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) zoning] system**, I'm mostly just supervising. My related work takes considerably less time than before.



## **What are the characteristics of a good HVAC system?**

There are two. First, a good HVAC system is sized correctly. Here in the south, engineers/designers oversize them because of the heat and humidity. But you really need right-sized equipment for proper operation.

Second, a good HVAC system offers quality. This way you're not changing and fixing parts as often.

## **In terms of HVAC, how do you balance your tenants' desires with the facility's desires?**

A lot of people here want to open their windows. They just have this inclination to get fresh air that way. But our air is filtered and dehumidified so it *is* fresh air, and opening windows defeats the purpose of our whole air system. I watch what's happening in the building on my computer. I have spaces set to 73 degrees. If I see that a resident's spaces are hanging at 75, I know that a window is open because the system would otherwise bring it down. So I nailed all of the windows shut on the third floor! That's the floor with spaces used by the public for retreats. The residents live on the second floor, though, and I can't nail their windows shut because they own the place.

## **What advice would you give a facility or maintenance manager who is considering working with VRF for the first time?**

Certainly at first I would spend a lot of time looking at the system through the computer. Everything you'll need is available to you that way. So then if a resident comes to you with a question, you don't physically go to their space, instead you see what the characteristics of that space are through the computer.

## **What is your favorite part of the job?**

Interacting with people and getting their needs taken care of. When people have problems and I come in and fix them, their day is instantly 100 percent better. I like being able to get people back into their routine. I like the problem-solving.



## FACILITY MANAGEMENT SUSTAINING COMFORT SOLUTIONS

### Five Trends in Multifamily Facility Management

The landscape of multifamily facility management has remained steady for several years now, with no big twists or turns. Technologies have continued to advance and tenant demographics have continued to shift. Recent studies have put numbers to some of these advancements and shifts, and have elucidated what it means to manage a multifamily facility today. Five trends, in particular, stand out:



Source: Property Management Insider

Baby Boomers are moving in. Are you ready?

- 1. Good facility management ranks among tenants' top desires.** *Multifamily Facility Executive Magazine* notes that keeping things "spick-and-span" makes a difference. Everything from good upkeep of the grounds to a well-run operation "sends a powerful subliminal message to potential and current residents alike that you will take care of them."
- 2. Bad facility management ranks among tenants' top complaints.** *J Turner Research* surveyed over 10,000 people from residential communities nationwide. The results name the top 10 complaints from tenants. **Over half** relate to ineffective facility management, including the overall customer service of the management staff, a general lack of preventative maintenance and concerns over security/safety/lighting.
- 3. Technological developments are ushering in an era of unparalleled whole building management.** From a **newly released advanced controls system** that integrates an unlimited number of automated systems to a **new platform** that tracks utility usage and provides feedback on building performance, this is a golden time for tech-savvy managers.
- 4. Tenants are going green, signaling potential changes for facility managers.** The National Multi Housing Council and Kingsley Associates partnered to survey 200,000 residents across the country. **Their findings:** Over 70 percent of respondents expressed interest in green principles or practices. Just as facilities may increasingly be expected to offer green features, managers may increasingly be expected to

focus on sustainable operations.

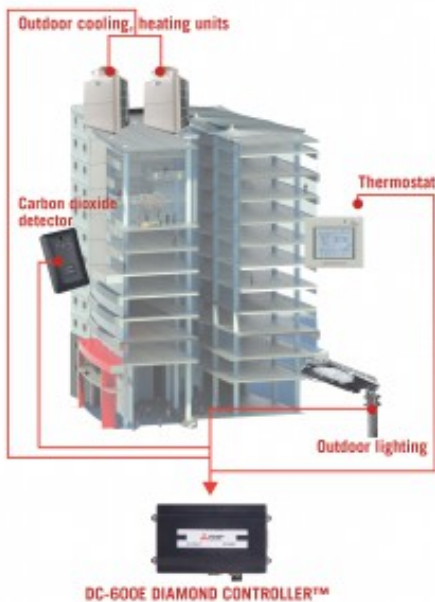
5. **Baby boomers are moving in, and they're just as picky as millennials.** The [Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University](#) found that, in the next decade, more than half of all new renter households will be baby boomers (ages 45 to 64). Like the millennial generation, baby boomers have high expectations for a facility's features/amenities and online presence. The older generation is also deeply interested in community. As tenants rise in average age, managers will have to think about how their role relates to and can benefit this generation's lifestyle.





## FACILITY MANAGEMENT SUSTAINING COMFORT SOLUTIONS

### Diamond Controls: Behind the Scenes



Managers of multifamily facilities have a new, innovative building management tool: the Diamond Controls™ solution (Diamond Controls) from Mitsubishi Electric US, Inc. Cooling & Heating Division (Mitsubishi Electric). The solution pairs the DC-600E™ Building Management Controller with comprehensive professional services, creating an unparalleled level of whole building management.

Diamond Controls can integrate any number of mechanical systems from Mitsubishi Electric or any other mechanical equipment manufacturer. It can be applied to a facility of any size, offering the following benefits, among others:

- **Efficiency Gain.** Managing **Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) zoning systems** through Diamond Controls maximizes energy and operational efficiency; the systems come with built-in sensors to gauge current operating conditions and adjust accordingly.
- **Lower Cost.** Modify cooling or heating, shut off lights, turn off water features, etc. – all around your facility's optimal schedule.
- **Better Maintenance.** Understand your facility's status through the controls' automatic notifications and real-time trends, reports, and analyses. These reports can include simple filter change notifications or more complex reports of equipment malfunctions.
- **Ease of Use.** Access the Diamond Controls network at any time from any location.

The challenges of managing multifamily buildings, from accurate energy allocation to preventative maintenance, are fully satisfied by Diamond Controls. Consult the [product brief](#) to learn more.