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ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF PLUMBING • HEATING • COOLING • CONTRACTORS

Volume 112, No. 01

January, 2026

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JANUARY 2026



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PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS

- by Kevin Kuhn
Illinois PHCC President

Get Set for the IL PHCC Expo & Education Day: March 20

The Illinois PHCC's Expo & Education Day is *happening* on Friday, March 20 at the Drury Lane Conference Center in Oakbrook Terrace. And the key word is happening! This industry "jewel" literally spoils us with so many practical, informative, interesting and enjoyable aspects related to this event.

The 4-hour Continuing Education opportunity is reason enough to attend in the first place. Be absolutely sure to remember to register before the deadline. For a nominal fee (which in turn helps support our amazing state chapter), attendees can rely on earning their credit through a worthwhile program, and there is no venue I have encountered that is as comfortable as Drury Lane's theater.

This year's Expo will again showcase over 160 exhibitors, and I assure you that the variety and industry-focused booths never disappoint the steady stream of visitors – which hovers around 1,500 throughout the day. To our partners throughout the trade, if you want to get in front of the plumbing and HVAC contractors and those who get the work done for their customers, make sure to reserve your spot at *this* tradeshow because it rivals (and in my view exceeds) all its national counterparts. As in past years, the *American Society of Plumbing Engineers* (ASPE – Chicago Chapter) will co-locate with added exhibitors, which in turn will fortify the show itself. Separate CEU class credit for the plumbing engineers who attend – with their own speakers leading ASPE Chicago's educational forum – will be presented during the overall event as well.

From the moment you enter Drury Lane, until the event concludes, you'll be glad you came. Coffee and donuts will be available in the early morning as the team of volunteers gets you registered and ready for the CEU



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class starting at 9 a.m. Casual lunch options will be on site for purchase, and the trade show will open at 12:00 p.m. (one hour before the ending time of the 4-hour class). After touring the show and having a chance to network with industry peers, the event will treat attendees with a concluding closing reception – and this tradition includes a sumptuous buffet and a free raffle featuring lots of great prizes for the lucky winners whose tickets get drawn.

The facility has ample parking, including a covered parking garage on the premises. Those traveling from out of town have two hotel options on the property, and many more nearby choices. Plus, the Oakbrook Terrace location is among the most easily accessible venues in Chicagoland.

In closing, please note that the IL PHCC chapter (in addition to the terrific in-person CEU class at Drury Lane on March 20) is also offering numerous online options to earn your required 4-hours of state-approved CEU credit to renew and maintain your Illinois or Chicago plumbing license. See page 5 in this issue for the class dates, fees, and deadlines to register. You have great choices, and all are planned to be convenient and helpful to PHCC contractors and their employees. *Lastly, my sincere thanks to Bev Potts and Shelly Lott. Their hard work is what makes it all happen for us!*

All the best - Kevin



2025/26 ILLINOIS PHCC CEU SCHEDULE

The Illinois PHCC schedule for online and in-person classes for the 2026 renewal year is listed below. These classes offer a minimum of 3 different speakers and topics in each class.

All Illinois PHCC classes will provide State hours for Certified Inspectors and Licensed Plumbers.

Below is our current schedule of continuing education classes for Illinois licensed plumbers.

Please visit our website at www.ilphcc.com for the latest information and to register for a class. Registration links will be live at least 6 weeks prior to the class date.

2025-2026 Continuing Education Dates

Fri., January 9, 2026 – 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm
(Online)

Fri., March 20, 2026 – 9:00 am – 1:00 pm
Drury Lane Conference Center,
Oakbrook Terrace, IL

Fri., February 6, 2026 – 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm
(Online)

(In person)

Sat., February 21, 2026 – 8:00 am – 12:00 pm
(Online)

Friday, April 24, 2026
12:00 pm – 4:00 pm
(Online)



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FEBRUARY 6, 2026

IL PHCC Online CEU Class

MARCH 21, 2026

IL PHCC & Auxiliary Board Meetings
Hilton Suites Hotel
Oakbrook Terrace, IL

FEBRUARY 21, 2026

IL PHCC Online CEU Class

MARCH 23-25, 2026

QSC of PHCC Catalyst
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

FEBRUARY 24-27, 2026

CCA of PHCC Spring Meeting
Park City, Utah

MAY 5-6, 2026

PHCC National Legislative Conference
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MARCH 20, 2026

IL PHCC Expo & Educational Day
Drury Lane Conference Center
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ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETS

The Illinois Department of Public Health Plumbing & Water Quality Program convened a meeting of the PCAC on December 18th in Springfield, Illinois.

Following introduction of members, Program Manager Brian Cox reviewed the purpose and function of the PCAC. He also provided a summary of the rule making process and other rules that the Council must comply with.

The main agenda items discussed at the meeting were All Gender Restroom requirements and the new requirement for bottle filling stations. There was also discussion on establishing subcommittees to address various code update needs.

Two future meeting dates were set as January 29, 2026 and February 25, 2026, with the location yet to be determined.

The PCAC members are: William Allison, Felicia Burton, Henry Cramer, John D'Amico, Donald Degonia, James Dillon, Pat Gross, Aaron Gurnsey, Robert Passarella, and Beverly Potts.



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IN MEMORY

Illinois PHCC Past President **Donald J. Ariano** (Don) passed away on December 8, 2025, in Lincolnshire, Illinois. He started his professional career at Cook Electric Research, where he worked for several years before joining his father Joseph and then brother-in-law in the family business in 1960. Don ran Ravinia Plumbing & Heating for 44 years. Throughout his career, Don held several leadership roles within the plumbing industry, including IL PHCC President in 1996, earning the respect of colleagues across the region.

He was a devoted husband of the late Claudia Ariano. Don and Claudia were married for 43 wonderful years until her passing in 2009. They were both regular, active participants at local, state, and national PHCC functions.

Don was the proud father of Ross Armetta (Urrara), David (Julie Ann), Julie, and Daniel (Juliet), and grandfather to five. Don's son David Ariano is a past President (and current Board member) of the Plumbing Contractors Association of Greater Chicago.

A visitation was held on Sunday, December 28th at Kelley & Spalding Funeral Home - 1787 Deerfield Road, Highland Park, IL 60035. A private burial was held at Ascension Cemetery, Libertyville, IL.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Midwest Veterans Closet (<http://www.midwestveteranscloset.org>) in Don's honor.

Robert K. Abbott, Abbott Industries, passed away on November 16th. A longstanding member company of the PCA of Greater Chicago, Bob co-founded Abbott Industries with his beloved wife, Delores, in 1973.

A 1956 graduate of Lane Technical High School, Bob early on pursued a career as a journeyman union plumber. In 1957, Bob and his high school sweetheart, Delores, were married. Their daughter, Lori, was born (on Labor Day) in 1959. Bob graduated from the Local 130 plumbing apprenticeship program in 1959. He later became an Officer of Local 130, at the age of only 23, and he also was appointed to several local union committees. Bob went on to represent Local 130 as a UA Convention Delegate and also served as an Examining Board Member. While working at Thomas H. Litvin Plumbing Company, Bob worked on the famed "City within a City" project – the now legendary Marina City. He left Litvin in 1972, after the "topping off" of the John Hancock Building in Chicago. Bob joined FE Moran soon after his departure from

Litvin, mainly to see if the drive to be a business owner was as strong as he had imagined it would be. The answer came in 1973, when, with Delores at his side, Abbott Industries, Inc. opened its doors. Bob was known for his kindness, devotion to family, and knowledge and expertise as a plumber and contractor – always willing to generously share his passion and problem-solving abilities with his peers.

A wake was held on November 23rd at the Sheldon-Goglin-Kaminski Funeral Home, 5935W. Belmont Avenue, Chicago with a funeral Mass on November 24 at St. Ferdinand Catholic Church.

Memorials may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital; Misericordia Home; or Make-A-Wish Foundation.

The IL PHCC extends its sympathy to the Ariano and Abbott families.



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GET YOUR BACKFLOW TEST KIT CALIBRATED AT THE EXPO

Test Gauge, Inc. will be offering on-site calibrations of your backflow test kit during the Illinois PHCC Expo on March 20th at the Drury Lane Conference Center in Oakbrook Terrace.

Test kits can be dropped off at the main entrance of Drury Lane before the CEU class that morning, beginning at 7:00AM. If you would like to drop your test kit off during the Expo, simply bring it to Test Gauge at booths 2 thru 4. All test kits can be picked up at that location prior to 4:00PM.



ILLINOIS AUXILIARY TO SELL ITEMS AT EXPO

The Illinois PHCC Auxiliary will be selling their Plumbing License Law t-shirts (long and short sleeve) at the IL PHCC Expo on March 20th. They will also be selling Illinois Plumbing Code books for the Illinois PHCC.

Funds raised by the Auxiliary go to scholarships and industry related projects.

Long sleeve t-shirts sell for \$25, and short sleeve are \$20.00

Illinois Plumbing Code books are \$60.00.



Illinois PHCC Expo & Educational Day

Friday, March 20, 2026
Drury Lane Conference Center
100 Drury Lane
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181

9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. – Continuing Education Class
Noon – 4:30 P.M. EXPO Trade Show

Friday, March 20th, will provide you with a great opportunity to view new products, talk to manufacturers, learn new technologies, network with other plumbers and contractors, and also have some fun. If you have not yet gotten your required **4 hours of continuing education credit for your 2026 license renewal**, now is the time. Multiple speakers will be presenting on a variety of industry topics. All of the day's activities are free of charge, with the exception of a \$35.00 fee for the 4 hour CEU class. **You must bring your most recent plumbing license with you to the class. Pre-registration is required for the CEU class.**

The **highlight of the day** will be the annual **Illinois PHCC trade show from 12:00-4:30 P.M.** Come see over 160 booths of the **latest products, tools, trucks and technologies**. Admittance to the **2026 Expo is free of charge**. After a busy day of education and visiting the Expo, relax and unwind at the **Illinois PHCC sponsored “After Expo” Reception**.

A block of **rooms** has been reserved at the Hilton Suites at a **special Expo rate of \$139.00** single/double occupancy plus tax. Remember that all rooms are 2 room suites that include a full breakfast buffet: upon check-in please inform the front desk of how many people are staying in your room. Hotel reservations can be made by calling the **Hilton Suites at 1-630-941-0100**. Be sure to mention the Illinois PHCC to get the special rate.

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***Illinois PHCC Educational Day
March 20, 2026
9:00 AM to 1:00 PM – CEU Class
Drury Lane Conference Center
100 Drury Lane
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181***

Registration for the CE class will be online at www.ilphcc.com. Click on the date of the class to register. The fee for the March 20, 2026 class is \$35.00

Each registrant will need to use their own profile (email address). If you do not have a profile you will need to create one. If you have issues logging in or are unable to register online, contact Shelly at shelly@ilphcc.com

Once the payment is processed you will receive an email confirmation. Registrations will not be processed unless accompanied by the fee.

You MUST bring your most recent Plumbers License with you to the class. Please arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the start time to complete registration.

**All registrations MUST be received before March 3, 2026.
NO WALK-INS will be accepted for the CEU class.**

Also counts as State hours for Certified Plumbing Inspectors.

Cancellations will be charged a cancellation fee of \$15.00.

Questions ??? contact Shelly at shelly@ilphcc.com

Remember the Expo runs from 12:00 to 4:30 P.M. and is **FREE!**

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – NEW LAWS

Nearly 300 new Illinois laws became effective on January 1, 2026. Below are some that pertain to our industry.

SB 224, now Public Act 104-0079, amends the Environmental Protection Act to provide that, in the case of water main installation projects, all water main-related appurtenances, including, but not limited to, fire hydrants and valves that are under the ownership and control of a public water supply and located in a public right of way or utility access easement, shall be included in the Agency's written approval. Design review and permitting of water main and fire hydrants is the sole responsibility of the Agency and water main and fire hydrants shall be installed in accordance with the written Agency permit. Fire hydrants connected to a plumbing system shall be installed in accordance with the Illinois Plumbing License Law and the rules and ordinances issued thereunder.

HB 3141, now Public Act 104-0277, is the same language as SB 224 above.

SB 1723, now Public Act 104-0119, bans carbon sequestration within an area that “overlies, underlies, or passes through” a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-designated sole-source aquifer, with lawmakers specifically citing the Mahomet Aquifer as the reason for the bill. Carbon sequestration is the process of capturing and storing carbon by injecting it underground.

HB 2391, now Public Act 104-0219, allows wastewater reuse for industrial use in addition to irrigation use that was passed last year.

Another important issue that became law in 2025 and was effective on January 1, 2026 is the requirement for all service laterals to be locatable. See the article titled **“New Requirements for Service Laterals”** in this issue for more details.





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NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR SERVICE LATERALS

From Invisible to Traceable: Illinois' Locatable Service Laterals Explained

Starting **January 1, 2026**, an Illinois law went into effect requiring any existing service lateral that is completely replaced or any newly installed lateral to be made locatable by electromagnetic or other equally effective means for marking the location of the service lateral. This update ensures underground connections from mains to properties can be accurately identified before excavation to prevent damage and delays. Contractors should begin using approved materials and methods, such as tracer wire or conductive pipe, to stay compliant.

Questions?



How Does the Law Define a Service Lateral?

A service lateral is the section of a service line that connects the mainline facility in the public right-of-way or utility easement to an individual customer or end user—whether that be a residential, commercial or industrial property. While the utility company owns and operates the mainline facility, the property owner is often responsible for the service lateral, which connects the mainline facility to the end user's building or facility beyond the meter point or shut-off valve if one exists.

Take a city sewer system as an example. The municipality owns, operates and maintains the sewer mains and all the manholes connected to the sewer main, whether they are positioned in the middle of the road, right-of-way or utility easement. Some municipalities own the main and the tee connection, some the right-of-way line, and some to the edge of the improved surface; but the laterals that run from that end point to a building wall are predominantly private lines. For properties with city water, as another example, service lines from the water main to the water meter or B-box are usually installed, owned and operated by the city. The line from the water meter or B-box to the house are installed by a plumbing contractor and privately owned.

Service laterals are most commonly associated with water, wastewater, storm drains, and rural electric co-ops; however, laterals may also deliver gas, electricity and communication services from the utility facility to the end user.

Why Is It Important Service Laterals Are Locatable?

Historically, little or no documentation has been available regarding the location of private lines and service laterals. And many existing laterals, those made of PVC, polyethylene or rolled black plastic, clay, or Orangeburg pipe cannot be found with electromagnetic pipe and cable locating equipment. As a result, an excavator today faces an increased risk of inadvertently striking and damaging a service line within the public right-of-way or utility easement. This can slow down operations and add repair costs to a project as well as cause personal injury.

What Does This Mean For You?

If you're planning a project that requires you to install or completely replace a service lateral, you are required to make the line locatable. A number of methods are available for doing so.

Method, Description, Best Use

Tracer Wire

Copper or copper-clad steel wire installed alongside non-metallic pipe, allowing an electromagnetic locator to detect its path. Most common for new installs of gas, water, sewer, and communications lines.

Detectable Warning Tape

Plastic tape with embedded metal strands, placed above the utility; locators can pick up the signal. Adds both traceability and a dig-in warning during excavation.

Electronic Markers (Ball Markers, RFID Tags)

Passive or active markers buried at key points such as service tees, bends, depth changes. Readable with a specialized locator. Good for locating specific points, like service connections.

Conductive Pipe or Conduit

Using metallic pipe (steel, copper) that can be directly located without tracer wire.

Common for older systems; less used in modern installs for corrosion reasons.

Sonde (Signal Transmitter)

A small battery-powered transmitter inserted into a pipe or duct; sends a signal picked up by a locator. Ideal for finding existing, non-traceable laterals during maintenance or mapping.

Service laterals vary greatly between operators, so always confirm local ownership and responsibility rules before starting work.

Resources

[Copperhead Industries](#)—a leading manufacturer of locate wires, drive-in magnesium ground rods.

[3M](#)—a leading manufacturer of Underground Utility and Pathway Marking Systems

[Berntsen](#)—a leading manufacturer of Utility Marking Products

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PHCC NATIONAL NEWS

PHCC Announces Launch of “Visionary Peer Groups” for Service & Repair Business Owners



PHCC is excited to unveil its new Visionary Peer Groups — a collaborative, coach-facilitated community designed to help plumbing, heating and cooling (p-h-c) service and repair business owners and general managers navigate challenges, grow their operations, and enhance profitability.

Starting in January 2026, members who have signed up will be invited to join small, focused peer groups (capped at fifteen participants) that meet monthly via Zoom for 1–1½ hours. These sessions will be led by experienced business coaches and structured to foster idea-sharing, problem-solving, accountability, and strategic planning.

Participants will benefit from:

- Collective wisdom and shared industry experience from peers facing similar business challenges.
- Expert facilitation and guidance in business growth, operations, team leadership, and customer service.
- A confidential, supportive environment where members function as a “board of advisors” for one another — offering feedback, benchmarks, and encouragement.

For more information, contact:

Beth Dobkin
dobkin@naphcc.org
916-835-5013

Catalyst 2026: Riding into the Future

The premier event for service and repair contractors.

Quality Service Contractors (QSC), an enhanced service group of the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors—National Association (PHCC), is proud to announce Catalyst 2026: *Riding into the Future*, taking place March 23–25, 2026, at the Omni Oklahoma City Hotel in Oklahoma City. Catalyst is the premier annual conference for service and repair contractors, and focuses on strengthening leadership, business performance, and industry connections.

Event Highlights

Attendees can expect a dynamic program designed to drive both personal growth and business success:

- **Hands-On Workshops & Expert Sessions** — Sessions focused on accountability, prioritization, time management, and effective business strategies to drive measurable results.
- **Networking & Peer Engagement** — Interactive live sessions, peer group roundtable discussions, and informal meetups to build relationships across the industry.
- **Social & Community Experiences** — Shared meals and social events including an evening at the Cowboy Museum and gatherings at local favorites like Cattlemen's Steakhouse to blend professional enrichment with community building.
- **Inspiring Keynote** — Coach Matthew Smiley, former special teams coordinator for the Buffalo Bills, will deliver a keynote address designed to equip attendees with new leadership perspectives, as well as the motivation necessary to face future challenges.

Why Attend

Catalyst 2026 is more than a conference — it's a collaboration hub for managers, business owners, and industry professionals to:

- Sharpen operational and leadership skills
- Expand professional networks
- Gain practical takeaways to elevate business growth.

Registration is now open for contractors and industry partners. Early sign-ups are encouraged to secure space and preferred workshop options. Discounts available for PHCC and QSC members.



Risk Management Resolutions For Your Business

Every workplace faces some degree of risk in their daily operations. Part of your role as a business owner is to communicate why risk management helps with employee safety. Equally as important is addressing how it can benefit everyone to support a culture of safety.

Setting a Risk Management Foundation

Consider creating strong [practices and policies](#) as a first step. This can help you identify, assess, and mitigate threats that could impact your bottom line and organization.

It can also reinforce the value of everyone participating to help prevent risks. Additionally, consider how to [educate and communicate](#) with your team. Explain that risk management can:

- Improve decision making when everyone understands potential risks.
- Enhance reputation by protecting your brand image.
- Increase efficiency by integrating risk management into daily operations.
- Equip your team with knowledge on how to [act and react to various situations](#).
- Encourage growth and innovation.

Risk Management Resolutions

Resolve to make risk management a priority for your business to help minimize hazards, create efficiencies, and build trust. Consider the following tips:

- Create and implement a risk management system specific to your business.
- Set aside resources to monitor and improve your plan.
- Conduct regular risk assessments.
- Communicate plans and expectations.
- Provide [training](#), education, and communication about policies.
- Document, escalate, and manage incidents as soon as they happen.

Reach out to your local Federated Insurance[®] [marketing representative](#) today for more information. Federated[®] clients can access [mySHIELD[®]](#) for additional industry-specific resources.

This article is for general information and risk prevention only and should not be considered legal or other expert advice. The recommendations herein may help reduce, but are not guaranteed to eliminate, any or all risk of loss. The information herein may be subject to, and is not a substitute for, any laws or regulations that may apply. Some of the services referenced herein may be provided by third parties wholly independent of Federated. Federated provides access to these services with the understanding that neither Federated nor its employees provide legal or other expert advice. All products and services not available in all states. Qualified counsel should be sought with questions specific to your circumstances and applicable laws.



Working Safely in Cold Weather

Winter weather can expose outdoor workers to frostbite, hypothermia, and cold stress, all of which can be fatal. It is important to know the wind chill temperature to better [prepare](#) and perform the work safely.

Follow these work practices to stay safe in cold weather:

- Know the symptoms of [cold stress](#); reddening skin, tingling, pain, swelling, leg cramps, numbness, and blisters.
- Dress properly; wear at least three layers of loose-fitting clothing, insulated gloves and boots, and cover your head.
- Monitor your physical condition and that of your coworkers.
- Stay dry and pack extra clothes; moisture can increase heat loss from the body.
- Take frequent breaks in warm, dry areas.
- Drink warm liquids.

For more safety tips, visit OSHA's [Winter Weather](#) page.

OSHA's [On-Site Consultation Program](#) provides no-cost and confidential occupational safety and health compliance assistance to small- and medium-sized businesses. Consultation services are separate from enforcement and do not result in penalties or citations. The [OSHA Training Institute Education Centers](#) offer courses for workers, employers, and managers on hazard recognition and abatement at convenient locations nationwide.

OSHA alerts are issued on occasion to draw attention to worker safety and health issues and solutions.



- osha.gov/winterweather
- 1-800-321-OSHA (6742)
- [@OSHA_DOL](https://twitter.com/OSHA_DOL)

IT'S YOUR LIFE

New Federal Law Affects 2026 Estate Planning Exemptions

A new federal law, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, has changed the federal gift and estate tax exemption limits, effective January 1, 2026. This act prevents a planned reduction in the lifetime estate and gift tax exemption that was scheduled under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

Key Changes for 2026

- **Lifetime Estate and Gift Tax Exemption:** The law sets the federal exemption at \$15 million for an individual, or \$30 million for a married couple. This is the amount a person can transfer during their lifetime or at death without incurring federal estate or gift tax. The exemption amount is expected to adjust for annual inflation.¹
- **Annual Gift Tax Exclusion:** The annual amount an individual can give to any number of recipients without paying gift tax remains at \$19,000 per person. A married couple can combine their exclusions to give up to \$38,000 per recipient.¹
- **Sunset Provision Removed:** The previous provision that would have reduced the lifetime exemption to approximately \$7 million per person in 2026 is no longer in effect.¹

Considerations for Estate Planning

These federal updates can offer new opportunities for [long-term estate planning](#). Individuals can use the higher exemption limits to make substantial gifts now. This can potentially remove future asset appreciation from their taxable estate.

It is important to note that these changes apply only to federal estate and gift taxes. This federal law does not affect state-level estate or inheritance taxes, which may still apply.

With new legislation on the horizon, consider reviewing and updating your existing estate plans. Talk to your Federated Insurance® [marketing representative](#) to assist in connecting with an independent attorney who specializes in [estate planning](#).

1. "IRS releases tax inflation adjustments for tax year 2026, including amendments from the One, Big, Beautiful Bill." IRS. <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-releases-tax-inflation-adjustments-for-tax-year-2026-including-amendments-from-the-one-big-beautiful-bill>. Published October 9, 2025. Accessed November 14, 2025.

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Illinois Association of Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors

Inspector Application for Membership

Please print or type

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Company Name _____

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(If applicable)

Please answer the following questions:

Are you also a contractor? _____ (if yes, you do not qualify for this membership category)

Would you be willing to serve on a committee? _____

Are you a member of the IPIA? _____ If yes, which chapter: _____

Are you a member of the IPEA? _____ If yes, which chapter: _____

Enclosed is my check for \$40.00

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