Products in Motion

The Southern PHC Magazine editorial team visited Bradford White’s International Technical Excellence Center (iTEC®), in Middleville, Mich.
Technology meets hands-on training at Bradford White’s International Technical Excellence Center

With new technologies constantly emerging in the plumbing and HVAC industry, staying up-to-date on best practices for installation and repair is critical for contractors.

At Bradford White’s International Technical Excellence Center (iTEC®), technicians receive hands-on and classroom training on the company’s family of products.

Southern PHC Magazine visited iTEC, located just down the road from Bradford White’s Middleville, Mich. manufacturing facility, to learn what contractors and technicians, engineers, wholesalers, and sales representatives who attend training at the center can expect.

“Upon completion of any Bradford White service training class, you’re going to have a much better understanding of how the product should work: sequence of operations, simple diagnostic tips and tricks, things that will complement our online offerings, and, importantly, who we are as a company,” says Dustin Bowerman, director—corporate training and product support, Bradford White Corporation.

Technical excellence

Bradford White started their training program in the early 2000s. “We had local contractors who worked with our product,” says Bowerman. “They would repair it, but they didn’t truly understand how they made the repairs other than just changing parts.”

The company realized that technicians want to work hands-on with the product, understand how it’s built, how it comes apart, how to repair it and put it back together.

“Classrooms that don’t offer a solid field experience are not always their venue of choice,” says Bowerman, “and that led us to building iTEC, which is a working showroom. The products are in motion in a live-fire environment.”

The 18,500-square-foot, LEED Gold certified building opened in 2012 and features a stadium-style, 64-seat classroom; a live-fire training lab with 10 workstations; a 4,000-square-foot mechanical room; and HD video capability for training sessions.

The building also houses Bradford White’s warranty and technical support center, where trained technicians are available 24/7 to assist customers all over the world with any issues that may arise.

Hands-on training

Bowerman says that iTEC hosts around a thousand attendees over the course of a calendar year, primarily contractors. Groups of engineers also come in a few times a year for more targeted training.

“A typical service training class would be two days covering from theory to installation to diagnostics and repair,” says Bowerman.

“Day two is primarily sequence of operations in getting to know our product as well as the trainers themselves,” he says. “Building the rapport, the relationship, is very important to us.

The morning portion includes an introductory session, then component review, how they should work, diagnosing issues, and a question-and-answer session.”

The last day of training also usually includes a tour of Bradford White’s manufacturing facility so attendees can see how heat pump, tankless, commercial and residential products are made.

“I feel it’s very important to see the product come in as a raw coil of steel and turn out as a water heater at the outset of the factory,” says Bowerman.
Since 2012, Bradford White’s International Technical Excellence Center (iTEC) has provided a place where industry professionals can get hands-on training on the company’s products, learn diagnosis and repair techniques, and stay up-to-date on the latest technology.

Who: Contractors, technicians, and engineers who want to be up-to-date on the latest Bradford White technology and learn tips and techniques for diagnosis and repair

What: Training in iTEC’s live-fire, hands-on training lab, 64-seat classroom, and mechanical room with products in motion

When: Training on Bradford White products can be scheduled through wholesalers and distributors; the training calendar for Laars boilers is available at laars.com.

Where: Bradford White’s 18,500-square-foot, LEED Gold certified International Technical Excellence Center, 445 Eagle Dr., Middleville, MI 49333

How: Industry professionals interested in training can contact their local Bradford White distributor to schedule a session. A Laars product training calendar is available at laars.com.