

## Phil's File October – December 2017

### Mother Nature Strike's the Pool Industry



My former role in the Pool Industry and current position at FPSIE, Inc. has my mind and soul still engaged in the industry and the many positive relationships I have forged. I am extremely focused on the common men and women that make up much of the workforce from manufacturing assembly lines, distribution fulfillment teams, counter, sales, warehouse workers, truck drivers, retail, service, repair, hot tub, workers and back office staffs, as well as the pool operators that do the lion's share of executing the owners and executive's business planning and goals. I have always

practiced and believed that an educational element is a part of growing the Pool & Hot Tub Industry. I think education is a critical component to professionalization and the Electrical, Plumbing, and HVAC Industries are great examples of where to set the bar of professionalism in the pool and hot tub Industry. I have budgeted some of my retirement time and made personal cash donations to FPSIE to support my belief that the more you know, the more you are worth. The FPSIE mission statement parallels my beliefs and conviction as a way for me to "give-back" some of my past success, learned skills and leadership attributes to help others – reach their goals and path in life's journey.

That being said, I can't help but think of the recent losses created by Hurricanes Harvey ("Houston Strong"), Irma, which struck almost all of Florida, Maria in Puerto Rico and many of the Caribbean Islands as well as Jose. Now, with news closer to my homes in Northern and Southern California, the many wildfires of 2017 this fall in California, the effects of which impact not only the pool and hot tub industry but also workers that are living in the areas devastated by these fires. Often the "workers" are the ones most affected by the wrath of these events. They are usually working from paycheck to paycheck, and are usually underinsured or not insured at all. The industry, based on feedback I am hearing, is already suffering from a shortage of willing to work, qualified, and educated workers. Losing any qualified workforce due to disasters without means of a financial recovery and often relocation housing costs and basic living essentials, including lost transportation is disturbing to me, to say the least, if employees can't afford to make ends meet. That would be a huge loss to this industry.

Not to lessen the losses due to hurricanes (mostly Water-related damage), but I am especially struck by the Napa, Sonoma, and Santa Rosa wildfire devastation and my concern for the losses incurred, the many relationships I have made through my career at General Pool & Spa Supply Inc, and FPSIE Inc. The amount of destruction, especially in Santa Rosa (City Limits), was almost nuclear, complete incineration and a TOTAL – TOTAL loss with a disturbing death toll to match. From what I know right now, no Pool Industry loss of life has occurred. I want to share the emailed thoughts and messages I sent to the "North Bay Pool Brethren" through one of my most cherished personal and business relationships POOL CORP - Santa Rosa, Superior Pool Products, branch manager, Dean Diorio once I saw online before and after pictures from just the first two days of the fateful firestorm:

**From Phil Gelhaus FPSIE Inc Chairman Tuesday, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

**Subject; Fire - Thoughts and prayers**

Hello Dean and Jerry, branch personnel, all others in North Bay,

I hope you all are safe and your families too! I can't believe the destruction I saw this morning "online". My heart and prayers go out to all the people we know and respect in the fire zone areas of Santa Rosa, Sonoma, Napa and all other areas in the path of this monster fire. So far, my Mom Dolores and her sister Billie are safe in Covelo hunkered down now. Apparently, Rohnert Park was spared.

I am in Southern California. Ciara's Forever Footprints Foundation Infant Loss Remembrance Walk - a yearly event, is this weekend in Tustin near yet another California fire zone but only 14 houses lost and NO loss of life.

I don't know anything I can do but to send words of encouragement, love, and respect to all those that have suffered loss. So many great friends and acquaintances made, I felt their losses. My wife Patty's sister lost her home Christmas Night 2016 and lived with us for 2 months, so I know the depth and life-changing circumstances. It is a helpless feeling. The good news all survived that fire 15 people were staying there when the fire struck.

I am scheduled to play in a 60+ Baseball tournament in Arizona and one of our opponents is the Greenville Dragons most of the players are from the MSBL Santa Rosa Empire league. I fear for my baseball brothers too.

God Bless all of you!

Swimcerely,  
Phil Gelhaus

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**Almost a week later Dean Diorio Manager of Superior Pool Products, Santa Rosa, answered back some of the losses encountered with this following email:**

Phil – thanks for your kind words and thoughts. I know you have a special place in your heart for the North Bay and especially the people and the memories that are a part of your life. Glad to hear your mom is ok too – she’s a sweetheart.

Everyone in here in POOLCORP world has survived relatively unscathed. A couple of my employees did have to evacuate but were able to return to their homes a few days later with no damage done.

Many of our customers/friends, however, did not fare so well –

John Pittman (the owner of Roger’s PS in Sebastopol) lost his house.

Matt and Tina from Johnson’s had 3 employees who lost their house. They also lost 2 of their service trucks.

Mitch Thiele from Crystal Clear Pool Service in Santa Rosa lost everything he owned and only got out of his house with seconds to spare.

3 of Herb's service guys lost their homes.

Dieter lost 2 of his homes – 1 in Fountain Grove and 1 in Bennett Valley.

Jerry Bertram lost his house in Bennett Valley.

My brother-in-law lost his home in Fountain Grove.

It's quite sad and will be tough for a while as the economic impact on people's businesses will be felt in the area for a while to come.

But we will persevere and press on with a positive attitude and a renewed spirit.

Good to hear from you my friend and give Patty a hug for us.

**Dean Diorio**

**Sales Center Manager Santa Rosa SPP 530°**

I find my mind and personal concerns wrapped around stories like this one that affected the people closest to us during such trying times that the rage and wrath that Mother Nature can reign down in the matter of little time to prepare and protect life and possessions. The upside of the losses incurred is how people rally and help each other out and the many giving people that care and step up that never get the press coverage. Rallying to rebound and rebuild is what is great about our Nation at its core. Just like the workers mentioned that strive to improve, advance their personal, business and family lives. The knowledge that is taught and shared is what helps create the spirit of community – industry and social.

To all people suffering from the recent disasters keep the faith good somehow will come full circle if a positive gene is left to regenerate to a new beginning. Hope springs eternal through faith. I remain faithful to all of you and believe in your strength

In closing, I again applaud and welcome the effort IPSSA Inc is putting forth to help related affected people coping with loss with the formation of the IPSSA Industry Disaster Relief Foundation a 501c3 nonprofit. Pool & Spa News reporter Rebecca Robledo on November 2, 2017, first reported the IPSSA response to those in need with her report:

#### **IPSSA Establishes Industry Disaster Relief Foundation**

The new disaster relief foundation is something everyone in the pool industry will be eager to hear.

By [Rebecca Robledo](#)



**The Independent Pool & Spa Service Association was created by service technicians to help each other in times of need. The organization is carrying on that philosophy in response to recent disasters.**

The announcement was made during the 2017 PSP Expo In response to the massive fires that recently swept through northern California, the Independent Pool and Spa Service Professional Organization has established the IPSSA Disaster Relief Foundation.

It is meant to assist those who lose a substantial portion of the pools on their route to disasters such as the Santa Rosa fires.

Assistance is not limited to IPSSA members. Sizable contributions have already been secured to begin a fund from suppliers and individuals in the industry. The amount has not been disclosed.

“We’ve all been affected across the industry,” said IPSSA President John Oldfield. “There are a lot of service technicians who have been decimated in their businesses.”

The group plans to form a 501(c)3 charitable organization and a governing committee of some kind. More details will follow.

As the 2017 Year ends it is the time of reflection, of accomplishments, and the time of year to gather with colleagues, friends, and most important to me, family. It is also a time for relaxation, giving, and planning for the future. FPSIE Inc wishes a Merry Christmas and Holiday Season to all our supporters and students, past and present and our wish to you is for a bright, safe and successful New Year! Fulfillment of Education is FPSIE mission and FPSIE pledges to do our part to make the industry a more informed and productive place to do business.

**P.S. SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POOL INDUSTRY!** The Phil’s file I started in October and was bringing to publication in this FPSIE Christmas issue is incredibly freaky with the December fire storms **STILL BURNING** fueled by the Santa Ana winds and the dry vegetation created by last winter and spring rainfall after 4 plus years of drought. My same Sentiments to those affected in Southern California as I made to the Northern California trade. My California trade Christmas wish is for California to catch a break in 2018 and have a safe and undistracted Mother Nature event. Please!

**Happy Holidays 2017-18**

**Swimcerely,**

**Phil Gelhaus FPSIE Inc Chairman**