

# SHOP TALK

*From the Physical Plant Division of the University of Florida  
www.ppd.ufl.edu*

## **Mission Statement:**

*We create and maintain facilities for the university community.*

## **Workin' On The Night Crew**



**Aaron Hutchinson kicks up a cloud of dust as he cleans the stairs in the Shands parking garages, east of Newell Drive.**

It's 10 PM on a Tuesday night, and the streets of the University of Florida campus are mostly deserted. The usual hum of activity is reduced to a few straggling students making their way down the empty sidewalks, under pools of light from fluorescent streetlamps. Classrooms and administrative buildings stand silent, lit windows with no one behind them. For most UF employees and students, the quiet campus is a little surreal. But for Lennon Fisher, it's just the start of another day at work.

Lennon, a solidly-built former Army vet, is a nighttime Custodial Supervisor at Physical Plant's Building Services Division. He has worked the night shift off and on during his 20 years with PPD. "I've been working with the floor crew for fifteen years," he said. "This particular shift, which is 10 PM to 6:30 AM, I've been working that now for six years. I like it – there's so much less traffic out here, and we can get twice the work done that we could during daytime."

The floor crew is Lennon's main responsibility, but he is currently overseeing a second crew while their supervisor, Albert Smith, is on disability leave. "Right now I'm in charge of four employees on the floor crew, and another five employees on what we call the garage crew," he said. "The floor crew is responsible for maintaining the floors and halls in all E&G buildings on campus. The garage crew is responsible for cleaning all parking garages, making sure they stay in good shape."

Tonight the floor crew is working inside Building 723, Chemical Engineering. Lennon meets up with the four-man group - Pierre Barton, Reggie Bradley, Dana Hayes and Richard Preston - outside the building. They load equipment into the elevator and ride up to the third floor, to begin stripping and waxing the halls.

"The wax we use is supposed to last five years," Lennon says. "But that depends on the traffic in the building – some of our buildings, we have to re-wax them after a year goes by."

On the third floor, the crew sets up their equipment – mops, buckets of wax and stripping agent, electric floor buffers, and a giant wet/dry vacuum, nicknamed "the Big Boy". They move all the furniture out of the halls in preparation for waxing.

"Sometimes people (in the buildings) will help us out by moving things out of the halls and rooms ahead of time," says Richard. "That helps us out a lot and saves a lot of time. Everything that we move, we try to put it back in exactly the same place that we found it."

The members of the floor crew say they enjoy working the night shift, and most of them hold down second jobs or go to school during the day. "Being able to work nights allows me to keep my day job," says Pierre. "And I like the atmosphere out here at night – a lot less traffic, less people to deal with this late in the evening."

The waxing process begins with a through sweeping

See NIGHT CREW Continued On Page 2



**The PPD overnight floor crew, left to right: Lennon Fisher, Reggie Bradley, Richard Preston, Pierre Barton, and Dana Hayes.**

## NIGHT CREW Cont. From Pg. 1

of the halls. Next, Lennon mops a chemical stripping agent onto the floor to bring up the old wax. All the members of the crew are wearing rubber boots, as the stripped wax causes the floors to become extremely slippery. After the stripping agent is laid down, Reggie takes control of a propane buffer, scrubbing the old wax away. Pierre uses a squeegee to pull the now-liquified mixture into the middle of the hall, while Richard comes behind him with the Big Boy to vacuum up the residue. Once the halls are cleared of old wax, Dana brings in a bucket of new wax and begins laying it down with a special mop. The crew will apply between 5-8 coats of new wax to each floor.

They work quickly and with precision, each member performing specific duties. "On a good night we can get a lot of floors done," says Reggie. "It depends on the number of floors per building, and how much foot traffic is going on that night, but I think we usually average 2-3 buildings per night."

It's now almost 2 AM, and Lennon is ready to check up on the garage crew. This crew spends the night making the rounds of each of the 13 parking garages on campus. Their job is to remove all debris from the parking areas and stairs, sweep the lots, and clean the elevator areas and windows where necessary.

Senior Custodian Aaron Hutchinson is the first member of the crew we find, just east of Shands Hospital. He uses a backpack-mounted leaf blower to clean dust and debris off the stairs at each corner of the garage.

"This thing weighs about 35 pounds," he says with a smile. "During the course of the night I go up and down about 60 flights of stairs, and it's quite a workout. I've been on this shift for seven months, so that I can go to school during the day here at the university. You couldn't do this job during the daytime, just too many people and cars to deal with out here."

Lennon adds, "You should see the chaos this crew has to deal with following the football games – we go through there and you have all these folks who've been partying all day, we're trying to clean around them, around their cars... thousands of people are trying to leave campus and we have to deal with that traffic. After the Tennessee game we had piles of trash everywhere in these garages, overflowing the trash cans. This crew puts in some serious

work on those nights, just unreal effort."



**James Carsey uses a sweeper to pick up trash from the aisles of a parking garage.**

while, Linda and Thanh empty garbage cans and clean the remaining areas of the garage.

Aaron says, "We do this loop each night, covering every garage. If we get finished early, we come back and do extra things like cleaning the handrails on stairs, little detail work like that. We've got a couple people out sick right now, but that just means the rest of us have to pick up the slack – it's our responsibility to keep these areas clean, and I think we do a nice job of that."

As the sun starts to rise over Gainesville, and students and professors begin to straggle into campus, the night crews are just finishing their shift. Their faces are largely anonymous, but the work they accomplish is very visible to the rest of campus. Gleaming floors and well-swept parking garages are often taken for granted – however, many hard hours are spent overnight on these areas.

"I feel like the night crew is a very important part of PPD and UF," says Lennon, smiling.

"We might not get noticed the way the daytime crews do, but I think that we do a great job, and I would hope that people can appreciate the work that we put into making the University look good."



**Old wax gets liquified and removed by Reggie Bradley and his electric scrubber. "Guiding this thing is easier than it looks," said Reggie. "It's all in the wrists."**

The other members of the crew – James Carsey, Linda Davis, Leonard Garrison, and Thanh Nguyen are scattered throughout the garage on individual tasks. Leonard carries a blower like Aaron, walking amongst the parked cars and shooting trash and dirt from beneath them into the middle of the aisles. James then comes behind on a sweeper, a four-wheeled contraption that looks like a mutant riding lawnmower, and picks up the trash with vacuuming attachments mounted on the machine. Mean-



**Pierre Barton scrapes old wax and debris out of a doorway. "Little details like this make a big difference in the finished product," he said.**

# UF Bridges Moves East To Waldo Road

As part of the University of Florida's expansion eastward, Physical Plant's Architecture and Engineering Department has recently completed a renovation project on a former DOT building at 2008 NE Waldo Road. The structure, UF Building #1603, was originally used as a laboratory for DOT's Materials Science department, and underwent major improvements in order to be converted to office space for UF's Bridges staff.

Project Manager Jay Beckenbach was in charge of the conversion. "The building dates from the 1950s," he said. "We basically had to gut the entire structure in order to bring it up to modern office building standards, as it was not suitable for office use in its previous state."



**The interior of the building was gutted and a new air conditioning system was installed.**

floor slab, and interior load-bearing walls. The old windows and fixtures were replaced, the restrooms received a makeover, and all exits were checked and brought up to code. The water and sewer systems were city water and wastewater, but Beckenbach's team installed a brand-new A/C system, as originally the building had no air conditioning.

"This is the first building on the eastside campus area to be connected

Originally, the building was intended to house the Bridges staff, as well as staff from several other departments. Plans were drawn up to create "loft space" within the building, which could then be used in a variety of ways. "Think of it in terms of a shopping center," Beckenbach said. "They're built around a major tenant, and then the surrounding spaces are built to be used by a variety of other tenants. In this case our major tenant was the Bridges staff, and the rest of the space (approx. 6000 square feet) was to be converted for other departments."

The building was cleaned of old chemicals and debris, and then stripped, leaving only the exterior walls and roof,



**3000 square feet of raised flooring was installed in order to house high speed fiber optic cable, linking the Bridges staff to the main campus.**

to a central chiller plant," said Beckenbach. "We have two 80-ton units in there to

support Building 1603, and we have space to add more chillers as more buildings come online over there."

Finally, paint, carpet and a drop ceiling were installed, along with 3000 square feet of raised floor specially designed for the Bridges staff. "The raised floor area houses high speed fiber optic cable, in order to meet Bridges' electronic data transfer needs," Beckenbach explained. "These cables were installed to meet the Office of Information Technology standards and will link the Bridges staff to the main UF campus."

As the design drew to a close, it became apparent that the original space estimates would have to change, and so the entire building was redesigned for Bridges' exclusive use. The project reached substantial completion in September 2005, and on Sept. 30, the Bridges staff was able to occupy the building for the first time.

Bridges Director Mike Corwin said, "PPD completed the project right on time, and we're very pleased with our new building. It's a very open, efficient space, and it gives us the flexibility our staff needs and allows us to organize our teams in a way that facilitates communication and collaboration."

## Temperature Going Up



**PPD's Paul Huntley uses a boom to lift a giant UFCC thermometer sign into place at the corner of SW 13th Street and Union Road.**



Physical Plant Division  
Personnel Services  
PO Box 117700  
Gainesville, FL 32611-7700

## PPD, Fraternities Team Up To Plant Trees



*PPD's Grounds Department recently worked together with several UF fraternities to plant trees around the retention pond between 34th St. and the Harn Museum. "We wanted to plant trees that do well near water sources," said PPD Landskeeping/ Groundskeeping Supt. Marty Werts. "Over 30 trees were used, including cypress trees, swamp dogwoods and pond pines."*

## Operations Engineering Provides Support To PPD, UF

by Joe Dyke, PPD Operations Engineering Coordinator

Give me your tired your poor/Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free/The wretched refuse of your teeming shore/Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me/I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

These are the words inscribed on the tablet held by Lady Liberty at the Statue of Liberty. Though the Operations Engineering Department at PPD does not have much in the way of huddled masses, we are made up of a group of individuals with diverse backgrounds and skills. If someone were to ask, "What exactly does Operations Engineering do?" a fair response would be, "Good question." However, more accurately, the response should probably be along the lines of, "Operations Engineering provides the Physical Plant Division engineering and other support, required to help the University of Florida succeed in its role of educating students."

The daily functions of Operations Engineering have recently shifted, to strengthen our ability to provide better support for Physical Plant Division's operations. This shift allows the subject matter experts that make up Operations Engineering to apply their knowledge to help maintain the University's infrastructure. The department currently consists of an electrical engineer (energy conservation), a mechanical engineer, a civil engineer, an urban forester, an electrical technician, meter readers, underground utility locators, and other support personnel. We have also recently added a roofing/building envelope inspector, and we plan to add a meter coordinator in the near future. These two new positions will help bolster Operations Engineering's ability to perform its support role. An explanation of some of this support follows:

### Operations Engineering General Support Functions

1. Update UF Utility Policy.
2. Manage the System Department's contracts.
3. Schedule and track Operations Department plan reviews and construction project inspections.
4. Coordinate and conduct plan reviews on all projects to ensure compliance with UF construction standards and PPD policies.
5. Perform in-progress inspections, SCIs, and FCIs.
6. Submit consolidated project review and inspection comments to Architecture & Engineering.
7. Generate periodic revisions to UF Construction Standards.
8. Provide updates to A&E to keep water/electrical/meters/potable water/sewer maps updated.
9. Attend design review, pre-bid, and pre-construction meetings.

The central function of the Operations Engineering Department is difficult to define; actually, it's probably better not to limit the department's role by ascribing a defined task set. However, though it might be difficult to assign a core function, the overall purpose of the Operations Engineering Department is to support Physical Plant Division in its efforts to help the University of Florida carry out its mission of educating students.