

Residential Resource

April 2005

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The Mission of NARPM is to support professional and ethical practices of rental home management through networking, education, and certification.

Embezzlement—It Can Happen to You

by Erika Green, MPM®

Since publishing the first article, "Embezzlement Inside and Out," in the September/October 2004 issue of the *Residential Resource* and co-presenting the embezzlement workshop at the 2004 NARPM Convention and Trade Show, the topic of embezzlement continues to rear its ugly head.

These are not necessarily new cases of embezzlement but rather activity that was recognized and discovered after and because of the article and workshop presentation.

In October, I received a call from a NARPM member who attended the workshop in Baltimore, MD, only a month earlier. He wanted more information, as he suspected a couple of employees might be embezzling from his company. He said that prior to attending the workshop, he thought himself to be so fortunate to have a staff that could effectively run his business for him. During the workshop, many of the warning signs discussed became waving red flags to him. He had just never recognized them as a potential problem until the workshop enabled him to put the pieces of the puzzle together that he previously dismissed as isolated incidents.

In November, I received an e-mail from a NARPM member who was unable to attend the convention but had read the article. He asked if I could send him the workshop information that the workshop attendees received. He suspected that embezzlement might have already occurred in his office and, if not, he knew he was vulnerable to it and wanted to take measures to safeguard against it. Of course, I immediately sent him the workshop handout as an e-mail attachment.

I received a call from another NARPM member in mid-January, just days prior to the 2005 Leadership Symposium. She began by thanking me for the details covered in the workshop. Specifically, she found value in the sections about

recognizing the warning signs and beginning the process of discovery. Yes, she had just discovered that an employee of over six years had been embezzling from her company.

She said that soon after attending the workshop at the convention and returning to her business, she began noticing some of the warning signs. So, she decided to do the monthly bank reconciliation herself. Unfortunately, it would not reconcile. She followed one of the suggestions of discovery and contracted her CPA to conduct an audit. This is a safeguard measure all firms should adopt and follow annually, even if no criminal activity is suspected. It is best to do it when the bookkeeper is on vacation and that they are not informed in advance of the audit. This way, if there is a potential problem, they have less of an opportunity to hide any incriminating evidence.

In this case, the member's bookkeeper was not due for a vacation anytime soon and a problem was discovered in the accounts that required immediate investigation by a third party. Therefore, the CPA conducted the audit in the presence of the company owner (NARPM member) and her bookkeeper. As the audit continued, the company owner began to recall earlier explanations by her bookkeeper as to how some discrepancies could occur in the software program but not in the reports generated by that program. These explanations included the bookkeeper demonstrating how someone (namely her) could finagle the entries in the program. The company owner, putting the pieces of the puzzle together, immediately fired the bookkeeper and continued working with her CPA through the process of discovery to determine just how bad this was. In speaking to the victim, I understand it was indeed bad. Financially, it was a loss of \$103,000.



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

READY, SET, GROW is alive and well in the Northwest Region! I just returned from the Northwest Regional Conference in Seattle, WA. A record attendance set the stage for dynamic workshops, an RMP® class, an MPM® class, the Ethics class, three incredible general session speakers, and a bustling trade show.

The Washington State Association Chapter is to be commended. Under the leadership of Tom Guyer, RMP®, April Sanders, MPM®, and James Emory Tungsvik, MPM®, the Northwest Regional Conference Committee advanced the mission of NARPM "to support the professional and ethical practices of rental home management through networking, education and certification." This committee made the commitment not to cancel the certification classes if attendance was low—a big risk, but it demonstrates their dedication to deliver the benefits NARPM promises. It is my pleasure to note that both certification classes were well attended and very successful. The trade show was a sell out with 31 vendors, all providing goods, services, and expertise to assist the property manager. Many of the vendors sponsored tables and special events that truly elevated the experience of the conference.

State and regional conferences are an important venue to deliver networking, education, and certification; don't overlook these events in your area. For the upcoming Colorado, California, and Florida conferences, the Northwest Regional has set the bar very high; however, I know the committees charged with organizing these conferences will rise to the occasion and deliver. Good Luck.

The Ready, Set, Grow theme is catching on throughout the NARPM community; especially at the chapter level. Many chapters have made commitments to host an RMP® and MPM® class, which increases the number of designations within the chapter, thus raising the professional behavior within their community's residential property management industry. An increased number of chapters are inviting national workshop instructors to bring education to the chapter; these topical workshops bring current information about the property management industry and techniques that increase the bottom line. The chapters within NARPM have the opportunity to schedule members of the National board of directors to visit and promote NARPM and effective chapter leadership; contact membershipcommittee@narpm.org for information about scheduling this special chapter event.

I hope each of you take the time to enjoy this special time of year. Winter is a fond memory as spring is all around; flowers are blooming, trees are beginning to bud, and yards are coming to full life. It is a beautiful time that allows a person to reflect on the true wonder that exists around us every day. Live each day with enthusiasm, do your very best at all times, and remember to smell the flowers along the way.



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Embezzlement

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Bad is subjective, and this was bad for many reasons since victimization means a financial impact, an organizational impact, and an emotional impact. During our call that day, I could feel her turmoil of disgust, anger, and disappointment. The embezzlement of my company occurred six years earlier (in fact, I also discovered it in January), yet, the all too familiar story made it seem like yesterday. Focusing on her need to take the necessary steps of discovery and legal intervention, I talked her through some of those next crucial steps. She had already paid the employee her final paycheck and she had contacted her attorney, as she intended to seek legal action.

We also discussed dealing with the organizational and emotional impact. Organizationally, she needed to disclose enough information to her remaining staff so they understood there was evidence and an ongoing investigation of a financial crime against the company. It was important that she assure them that business would continue as usual, while dividing some of the various bookkeeping duties amongst several employees, as well as, finding someone that she could truly trust as a bookkeeper. Of course, she had trusted the long-term employee that committed the crime, so she now realized she needed to be more involved and establish a program of routine auditing of the accounts. Emotionally, she would find support through her family, friends, and colleagues, while offering support to her staff.

This month, as I was writing this article, one of my clients (property investor) was in my office when she casually stated that an embezzler had victimized her husband's business years earlier. Although all the stories of embezzlement I've heard are disheartening, this one was particularly devastating. The embezzler was a business partner who her husband trusted completely. To the tune of over \$450,000, the business partner funneled money out of the business over a period of eight years. They had only been business partners for nine years. Because this crimi-

nal was a business partner, her husband had no legal recourse, and, in fact, he was forced to pay the IRS for the thousands of dollars of back taxes and penalties that were never paid even though they looked like they had been when the business partner "cooked the books." They were in their early fifties at the time and this financial tragedy liquidated all of their assets, changing their lives forever.

On a final note, I am concerned about the number of people who have heard these stories of embezzlement and proclaimed things like, "It could never happen to me," "My bookkeeper has become a special friend. She/he would never do this," or "I trust my staff impeccably, as they run the business so I can be away," or "My bookkeeper is my best friend's son (or daughter) and I know they would never do such a thing." The fact is, I personally know business owners who have all believed they were immune to embezzlement because of at least one of these or similar reasons and, indeed, an employee/staff member, specifically the one(s) they thought would never do it, has victimized them. I am not suggesting that staff cannot be trusted. What I am saying is that no one will ever have as much of a vested interest in the success of your business as you do, so it is only prudent that you take the steps necessary to safeguard your business in an attempt to prevent embezzlement or reduce its financial impact should it occur.

If it all sounds dramatic, it's because it is not only dramatic, but also traumatic. Another story in this issue, "To Catch a Thief," tells the tale of two NARPM members being the victims of embezzlement. Fortunately, it was caught very early and ended almost comically. The fact is these victims, suffering a financial loss of less than \$1,000, were just as victimized as others who lost much more money. Their diligence in having proper systems in place and pursuing the criminal until conclusion is what enabled them to survive, thrive, and move forward.

Erika K. Green, MPM®, is the Broker of Quest Property Services Inc. in Fort Worth, TX. She currently serves as NARPM's National Secretary, Editorial chair, and Convention Arrangements chair.

Brand Identity Competition!

The NARPM National Marketing Committee Invites You to Participate...

Join in the "Brand Identity Competition" at the 2005 NARPM National Convention September 22-25, 2005, in Salt Lake City, UT, and demonstrate your marketing image.

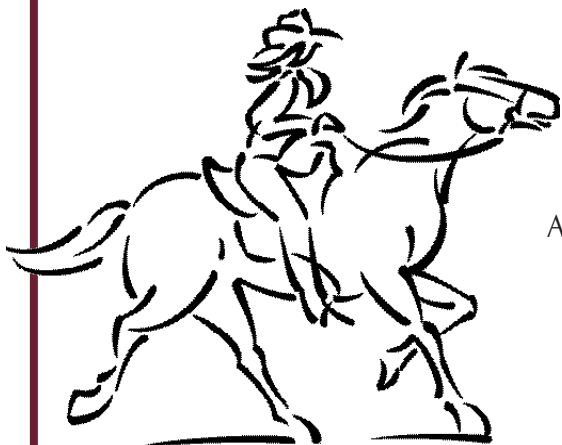
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Anne B. McCawley, RMP®, Contest Chair • Phone: 480/969-1818
E-mail: anne@bennett2rentit.com

Winners will share \$500 in prizes and will be announced at the final luncheon of the convention.



Selling Your Property Management Company...What's It Worth?

by Ernest F. Oriente, The Coach

Over the years I have helped a number of my property management clients sell their companies. In addition, other clients often ask me about tips and techniques for maximizing the future sale of their property management company. Please know, the sale of your company takes planning and a comprehensive approach over 12–24 months. If you are thinking about selling your property management company today or in the future, here are some important questions/areas to consider:

1. Does your property management company have a consistent track record of leasing success, high occupancy and profitability, for the past 12 to 24 months?
2. Do you have clean financial reports that tell a positive story? Do your financial results need any additional clarification/explanation? Will the due diligence process spotlight any surprises? What are you doing today to reduce/eliminate these surprises?
3. During the due diligence process, what will a potential buyer learn about employee turnover?
4. If you were to strengthen the outside marketing being done by those on your team or add a powerful strategic alliance would this add more value to the sale of your company?
5. Does your marketing/advertising engine strengthen the brand of your company? Does your Web site reflect best-practices within the multi-housing industry?
6. How strong are your training/development programs? Can you show measurable and specific results?
7. Do you have a strong coaching/mentoring program—one that grows/grooms future property management SuperStars?
8. How well do those on your team understand and know their competition? Do they know more about their competition than their

competition knows about them? Would your competition be interested in buying your company?

9. Are you leveraging the best technology/software available today? Are you maximizing the resources of your multi-housing vendors/partners?
10. How strong are the operational policies/procedures within your property management company? Are they well documented? Remember, part of what you present when you sell your property management company is the value of this intellectual capital.
11. If your property management company were sold today, would you be willing to make a smooth transition with the new buyer/company? How long would you be willing to work during this transition?
12. If you could add an additional 15–30% to the sales price of your company, would you be willing to stay for one or two years and earn a larger payout at the end?
13. If you were selling your company to a public company, would you be willing to take some of the sale price in stock? What percent would be comfortable for you?
14. If you were to merge with another company, then sell a combined company, who would you merge with? How does their company culture meld with yours?
15. Have you considering selling your company to your executive team? Is going public an option?
16. What are the industry multiples for the sale of other property management companies? How does this sales price match your expectations?

TIP FROM THE COACH

Are you positively certain you want to sell your company? Many times when I first speak with the President/Owner of a property management company, I ask this question and listen carefully to their reply. It takes lots of time, energy, and patience to sell your company at the maximum price. In turn, if you and your company are looking to acquire other property management companies, the questions/areas covered in this article are equally important to consider.

Want to learn more about how to sell your company or to hear what others are doing around the country? Fax a note on your letterhead to 435/615-8670 or send an e-mail to ernest@powerhour.com and the Coach will fax/e-mail you a free TeleForum invitation. During this call we will discuss how to implement the steps in this article.

Author's note: Ernest F. Oriente, The Coach, is the founder of PowerHour® a professional business coaching/recruiting service and the author of SmartMatch Alliances™. He has spent 17,100 hours [since 1988] delivering customized training, by telephone, in leadership, traditional/Internet marketing and sales for property management companies, apartment locator/corporate housing services and multi-housing sales/service companies worldwide. PowerHour® specializes in global distance learning by telephone, using their state-of-the-art conference call system for interactive and dynamic TeleForums. Twice-monthly TeleForums link 10–100 executives/professionals/individuals who are geographically dispersed, in a time efficient and profitable format. PowerHour® is based in Olympic-town, Park City, UT, at 435/615-8486, by e-mail ernest@powerhour.com or visit their TeleForum Web site: www.powerhour.com. To receive a free property management success newsletter, with subscribers throughout North America, send an e-mail to: ernest@powerhour.com. Recent PowerHour® articles have appeared in 4,000+ business/trade publications and Web sites.

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Affinity Partners

by Dorothy Zarelli, Willow Properties

A condensed version of this article appeared in the March 2005 issue. Following is the full version.

At recent NARPM events you may have heard talk of Affinity Partners. You might be wondering what is an Affinity Partner and why should you care? Affinity Partners save *you* and your clients money *and* make money for NARPM. It doesn't get much better than that!

You probably have been receiving mailings from Sherwin Williams Paint with a "Preferred Customer Discount Card" and a Price Record Card. Those mailings are a result of extensive negotiations between Sherwin Williams, the National NARPM board, and the Affiliate Committee. Sherwin Williams is the newest member of our Affinity Program.

NARPM and Sherwin Williams have signed a "Supply Agreement" that allows you or your handyman/painter to buy Sherwin Williams paint and supplies at a discount. That discount can be up to 25%. In some areas, Sherwin Williams has floor-covering stores. The program is a marketing strategy for both the affiliate and the member. Sherwin Williams has consistent, competitive pricing across the nation, knowledgeable people, thousands of paint products to choose from, and 135 years of experience. As an affiliate, Sherwin Williams has the designation of a Preferred Supplier so your owner gets a really good price for the paint, and you look like a hero to your owner.

NARPM members as a whole are also winners. Part of the affinity program pays a marketing commission or royalty from Sherwin Williams to NARPM (when the discount cards are used), which can result in a tidy little sum if we all start using this program.

So how do you get in on this great deal? You have to use the Discount Card, because that is how they track the volume of sales. Check with your handyman or painter. Can they switch to Sherwin Williams paint? Are they getting those kinds of prices?

This is just another way to market the NARPM membership to your owners or potential owners. One of the values of using a NARPM member is our "contacts." We all get better prices because we have arrangements with vendors; this arrangement is just on a grander scale. One trip to any Sherwin Williams store with your card and you can begin to get the special pricing. Your vendors can do the same in your name.

If you have an office with payroll, maybe another affiliate member who is also a affinity member can help you with that need. Try PayChex Inc. Check out their ad in the January Resource or online at www.paychex.com. They also give a royalty and a 15% discount for NARPM members using their services. But you must mention NARPM and our code (5754) to participate in the program.

Also in the works is an agreement with a credit card processing firm. Keep your eyes on this one! This should open up some new avenues for the perennial, "I couldn't get there to pay my rent."

Meanwhile, check out the NARPM site and the Affiliate list. Who can you support and use at the local level? Our affiliates are a vital part of our industry, they make us look good every day. Thanks for supporting them.

Dorothy is a partner with her husband in Willow Properties in Lakewood, WA. She is President of the local Pierce County, WA, Chapter of NARPM and a member of the National Affiliate Committee.

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To Catch a Thief—1st Anniversary

by Dave Fletcher, RMP®, and Betty Fletcher, MPM®

Several applicants answered our ad, “Wanted: Assistant for busy property management office.” This one was the best of the bunch; she looked good, talked good, and had good references from her previous job in a local law office. And the best part, she could start immediately! It was March 1, 2004.

Training began and she learned the management software quickly. Within days she was accepting tenants’ rents and issuing computer-generated receipts. All was going according to plan.

On the sixth of each month, we begin the criminal eviction process by serving a 10-day Notice to Vacate to any tenants with unpaid rent. It was April 6, 2004. The first phone call came in. Tenant A said he had paid his rent on time by dropping two sequential and attached money orders through the mail slot in our office door. Yet, his account showed only a partial payment. Hmm.

This was easy to double check. Our company policy is to copy every item on every deposit which allows us to research situations like this. We pulled the copies of that day’s deposit and found only the one money order. Upon further examination we also noticed that another tenant’s (Tenant B) payment was included in the deposit total but was missing from the copies. Hmm...

Tenant A brought in the money order stub and we confirmed that both money orders had in fact been cashed. We quickly completed the paperwork requesting a refund. It would take a minimum of 30 days. That’s OK, it could be worse, we thought.

Tenant B took a bit longer for us to connect with. We showed he also had a partial month’s rent still due. He had also paid by money order and went to get the stub to prove it. Interestingly enough it was for the full amount of his rent and was stapled neatly to the receipt for the purchase of the money order and to the computer generated receipt (for the full amount) from our office! He hesitantly allowed us to take the receipt back to our office to research how this could have happened. After calling the money order company and confirming that the money order had been cashed, we requested and paid for a copy. It should arrive within 30-90 days. Hmm.

Thankfully, our management software support technician was quickly able to help us discover why this tenant had a receipt for full payment and yet his account showed only a partial payment made several days later. After leading us through a few keystrokes, there it was, Tenant B had indeed come in on the first and paid his rent and received his receipt. Then a mere two hours later the payment was voided! Actually we could see where it was posted, voided, posted again and voided again! Then five days later, the partial payment was posted to his account. Hmm. It was posted the same day as Tenant A’s partial payment. Double Hmm. And it was for the same amount as Tenant A’s missing money order. Triple Hmm.

We called our bank and requested copies of every deposit since the first of the month including all items deposited. Amazingly, we were able to pick them up early the next morning—at no charge! And there they were, both of Tenant A’s money orders! It was apparent that both of

these money orders were posted giving each tenant only a partial payment. Hmm.

Sure we had the necessary proof, we proceeded to the police department expecting them to accompany us back to our office where they

would arrest our newest employee on the spot. It didn’t quite happen that way. The amount of missing money only amounted to a misdemeanor crime. The police said they would also need a copy of the actual money order. Their suggestion was for us to confront her, and if she confessed, to get her to sign an agreement to repay us. There was nothing they could do for us at that time, while they assured us that it could be much worse. Hmm.

The short version is that we confronted, she denied, we fired. It was April 15, 2004. Well, at least we could recoup most of the missing funds from her final check. *Wrong!* Employment laws require that you pay terminated employees all that you owe them within seven days of termination *or* you could be on the hook to continue their salary until the day they receive their final check. Ouch!

So to recap, it can take 30–90 days to get a copy of a stolen and cashed money order. The police were not interested because she didn’t steal enough money. We only get seven days to pay terminated

employees. And, oh yeah, we also had the honor of paying the missing rent to the property owner. There was absolutely nothing that seemed fair about this.

Thankfully, we continued to pursue the issue. In doing so, we discovered that when requesting a copy of the money order, you would get faster service by using terms like ‘fraud,’ ‘theft,’ or ‘embezzlement.’ After paying for overnight delivery, we received a copy of the money order and sure enough there was our absolute proof. She had written her name over ours on the payee line before cashing it.

A bit of satisfaction came from the knowledge that the police were now interested. Since she had ‘altered’ the money order, it elevated the charge to felony forgery. Finally, vindication was at hand. So we, along with the tenant, made statements to the police, and they issued an arrest warrant. The only problem was that it sat in the file along with all the other unserved warrants. Nothing more would happen without getting the warrant served. Days stretched into weeks and then into months without any progress.

Our big break came during a visit from Andrea Caldwell, MPM®, NARPM’s then national president, to our Central Arkansas Chapter meeting. That evening, after dinner at a local ‘hole in the wall’ eatery, as we stood on the parking lot draining the last drop of networking opportunity from the day, lo and behold who walked by? You guessed it, the thief!

Excitedly, we dialed the non-emergency police number (programmed into my cell phone since we do criminal evictions), and after explaining the situation to the dispatcher, they verified that indeed this person had several outstanding warrants. They promised to send officers right over. Madam President Caldwell proceeded inside the bar to confirm the thief was blissfully unaware of her impending arrest. Somewhat impatient, we



staked out all exits and awaited the arrival of Little Rock's finest. Finally two police cars whipped up in front and we all proceeded to walk into the bar for the big moment. But no *thief* was sitting at the bar! Yikes! Immediately, we (Madam President Caldwell, Dave and me) fanned out in an amazing search pattern looking for the *thief*! The other bar patrons stared in amazement at our determined, yet professional, efforts (comes from years of property management experience and the excellent educational opportunities shared by fellow NARPM members at numerous conventions). Hmm.

The back doors were bolted shut. We had been staking out the front entrances so we knew she did not get past us. Hmm...then we noticed the door lock on the women's restroom was engaged. Could it be? We all gathered around (officers included), as the door slowly opened and the *thief* walked out! The officers approached and said, "Are you _____ (the *thief*)?" She responded, "Yes, is there a problem with that?" To which they replied, "Sure is, let's step outside and discuss it." So we all trailed out the door where she denied any knowledge of outstanding warrants. The calm facade started to deteriorate once she was told to place her hands on the car hood and 'spread em!' All the while, Madam President Caldwell led us in a rousing chorus of 'Bad Girl, Bad Girl, whatcha gonna do when they come for you? Bad Girl. Bad Girl.' What a night! It was October 21, 2004.

Our euphoria has dimmed as we approach the first anniversary of the theft and are still waiting to face the *thief* in court. However we have learned some lessons to share with you:

- There is no way to guarantee you are immune to theft or embezzlement. The best you can do is shorten the discovery time by implementing and following good office procedures.

- Have all bank correspondence sent to your home address or at the very least do not allow anyone else to open such mail.
- Reconcile the bank statement yourself, upon receipt.
- Regularly follow up on tenant balances and/or scheduled payments.
- With the money order stub, you can confirm if a money order has been cashed.
- Use key phrases like theft, fraud, or embezzlement to get the attention of the money order facility.
- While there is a minimum dollar amount required for a theft to become a felony, altering a money order is an automatic felony forgery (check with your state).
- Once you terminate an employee for any reason, pay them within seven days of termination. Period. (Check with your state).
- Just because you get the warrant issued doesn't mean a quick arrest. And an arrest doesn't mean a quick trial.
- Most importantly, finding the humor in any situation helps to keep you from crying, and sharing with fellow NARPM members makes you realize that you are not alone! And that is priceless!

Betty Fletcher, MPM®, and Dave Fletcher, RMP®, are the owners of Fletcher Property Management Inc. in Little Rock, AR, and together manage 220 units for 68 owners. They are active members of the Central AR chapter of NARPM. Dave is the 2005 chapter president and Betty serves on the National board of directors.

"I sign 80% of my leases from ads I place on RentClicks. I have also cut my newspaper bill by 75%."

Jan Lassen
Denver NARPM Chapter

"I now spend 50% less on newspaper advertising and RentClicks is my #1 source for new tenants."

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Kansas City NARPM Chapter



RentClicks

**We're not trying to replace your website,
...We're trying to replace the newspaper.**

D-I-D Can Make You M-O-N-E-Y!

by Mike Nelson, Excalibur Home Management LLC

HOW A DIGITAL PHONE SYSTEM CAN ENHANCE YOUR SERVICE AND INCOME

D-I-D stands for Direct in Dial. First, let's explain the difference between the physical telephone line run in to your office and a D-I-D number. While there might be only three physical lines into the office, there might be 20 or more different "virtual" D-I-D numbers associated with those lines. So, when an outside caller dials any one of the D-I-D numbers, the phone company's computer routes the call to the primary physical phone line into your office, and if that line is busy, the call rolls over to the second line and so on. Then, once the call gets into the company's phone system, that system processes the call as it has been instructed based upon the D-I-D number that was dialed.

This allows efficient call processing with no auto attendant phone tree, no delay in routing the call, and no need for a receptionist to take the call. So how will this technology help you make money? These new digital phone systems offer several features that you might appreciate. Not only can you route calls directly to specific individuals (each person has a direct number), you can route types of calls such as leasing, maintenance, accounting, or administration directly to the appropriate person or persons. As an added benefit, the system can generate statistics on the calls such as how many and how often they come, when they come, and at what time they come.

Let's look at the benefits of just one of these: counting your phone calls. We have different D-I-D telephone number on our 'For Rent' signs, in our yellow pages ad, and in our newspaper ads. And we are just now establishing a separate number for use on our Web site listings. Would you like to know how many people call your office from each of your ad sources? Wouldn't it be nice to know where your advertising dollars have been most effective? I do. I can run a report each month from this phone system that will show me how many times each of the numbers was dialed which gives me a good idea of how people find our company.

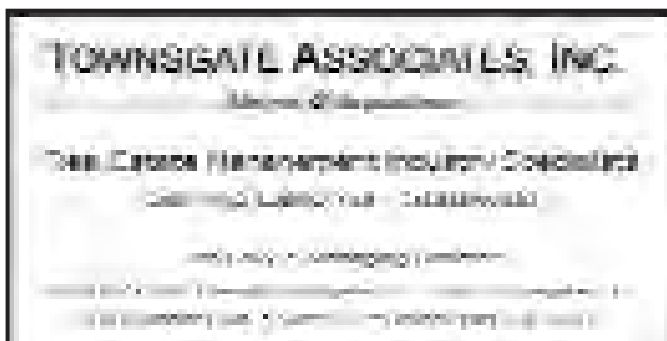
We have separate D-I-D numbers for non-emergency and emergency maintenance calls. These numbers are provided to new tenants as part of their move in package. If they call the non-emergency number, the call is routed directly to the people in the office (three extensions ring simultaneously) that would handle their request. If this call came in after hours, then the voicemail will take a message to be returned the next business day. If they call the emergency maintenance line, the system will take a message and then the system will contact the manager on call (24-7) to deliver the message. We don't have a dedicated receptionist. When someone dials our main office number, during business hours, the phone rings at six different desks so that we can answer that call "live." If no one can answer within three rings, then the call goes to the auto-attendant and is routed just like a traditional phone/voicemail call.

Most of these digital systems also have a feature called "One Number Access." As mentioned above, each of our employees and agents has a D-I-D number assigned to them. For our administrative staff, calls go directly to their desk and then bounce to voicemail if the line is busy or not answered in three rings. But our property managers and marketing staff work outside the main office. This system can track us down at up to four different telephone numbers. So when someone tries to call us the system will give the caller a choice to either: 1) locate the individual now or 2) leave a voicemail message. Each user may program the system with the numbers he or she wants the system to try. For instance, if you dial me at my D-I-D *insert a number*, the call comes into our phone system where I have it set to first try me at my desk extension, then my home office phone, then my cell phone, and if still not answered to place the call in voicemail. This provides my callers with "one number" to reach me and allows me to answer more calls and offer a higher level of service. I can also program different schedules as to when and where the system should try to reach me so that I am not bothered at night or on the weekends (unless I am on call).

These digital systems offer other benefits too. You might be concerned about calling back a tenant from your home phone or cell phone because you don't want them to get your number in their caller I.D. With these digital systems, you can call in to your phone system then get an outside line to dial outbound so that the only number that the receiver sees on their caller I.D. is your office number. This helps your private numbers remain private. We also use these features for our employees to make company-related long distance calls from their home offices or their cell phones. Since our telephone plan includes a block of long distance minutes at a deeply discounted rate, our representatives call in to our system locally, then dial their long distance call out from the phone system, and we don't have to reimburse anyone for long distance charges.

In summary, these new digital phone systems can improve your marketing, your maintenance and administrative responsiveness, and your accessibility, without sacrificing your privacy. If you have not upgraded your phone system in a while, look in to these new digital systems. The options they offer will give you a tremendous competitive advantage.

Michael E. Nelson is the president and managing broker of Excalibur Home Management LLC, formed in 1985, which manages over 700 rental homes in the Metro Atlanta area. He is a graduate of the Realtor's Institute (GRI) and an RMP®. Mike has served as president of the Atlanta Chapter of NARPM (2003) and continues to serve as a director for the Atlanta board.



Pets in Rentals

by Cynthia Merodias-Montenegro

Even landlords who do not allow pets need a pet policy. Fair Housing stipulates that you cannot discriminate against someone with disabilities, which can include "physical or mental disability (including hearing, mobility and visual impairments, chronic alcoholism, chronic mental illness, AIDS, AIDS Related Complex and mental retardation)." Fair Housing further states; "You must make reasonable accommodations." As an example, a building with a 'No Pets' policy must allow a visually impaired tenant to keep a guide dog. It could also include someone who has a mental problem that has a prescription/letter from their doctor to keep a pet to assist them with their problem. Federal law doesn't require any specific type of training [for service animals]. Due to Fair Housing you may find yourself with pets. Without a pet policy you have little or no control over the pet. Example of what you should include in your agreement: "No pets allowed except assisted living animals. All animals must abide by the following," then list rules/guidelines.

Reduce vacancies increase revenue. The Humane Society of the United States, reports that some 49.4% of U.S. renters have pets. Yet only 5 percent of rental housing allows animals. That means that tenants are not compliant with their landlords about having pets. Allowing pets and having a pet policy gives the tenants guidance to pet behavior and rules. Allowing pets can lower your vacancy rate, broaden your pool of prospective tenants and keep tenants that may otherwise move in order to have or keep pets. Along with additional deposits for pets, some landlords charge additional rent per pet, which tenants are willing to pay to keep their pets.

It is conducive to good business that you have a pet policy. It should include: limit the number of animals, type of breeds allowed (check with your insurance if they have exception to some animals), have proper licensing, type of animals allowed, clean up after their pets, and up-to-date vaccinations as required by local law. Residents should be required to keep pets under control at all times, not allow them to disturb the neighbors, and secure written permission from the landlord to have a pet. Minimum requirement should include that all dogs and cats be spayed or neutered.

There are many benefits to requiring spaying and neutering. Most of the concerns landlords come up with about allowing pets can be eliminated

or reduced by requiring spaying and neutering, including reduction of

- most urine marking in dogs and "spraying" in cats,
- destructive behavior and wandering related to hormonal urges,
- additional pets (puppies and kittens),
- aggression,
- stray male coming into the area due to a female in heat (from as far as a mile), and
- liability (approximately 90% of dog bites are from unaltered dogs).

Much of California, some of the new subdivisions, and HUD are now requiring spaying and neutering. Posters are available from the Humane Society of Southern Arizona, "Spaying and neutering is good for pets and good for your property."

There is a solution, be a part of it. In our community alone there are some 40,000 companion animals that are euthanized due to lack of homes. There are just too many unwanted animals. The only way to stop animal overpopulation is through controlling reproduction. We can help prevent thousands of companion animals from being euthanized. Many prospective tenants say they intend to alter their pets. Make it a condition of their renting from you.

Realtor Cynthia Merodias-Montenegro of Burriss, Hennessy & Co. is available to assist with forms and posters on pets in rentals. She can be contact by phone at 520/744-9503 and e-mail at merodias_montenegro@comcast.net.



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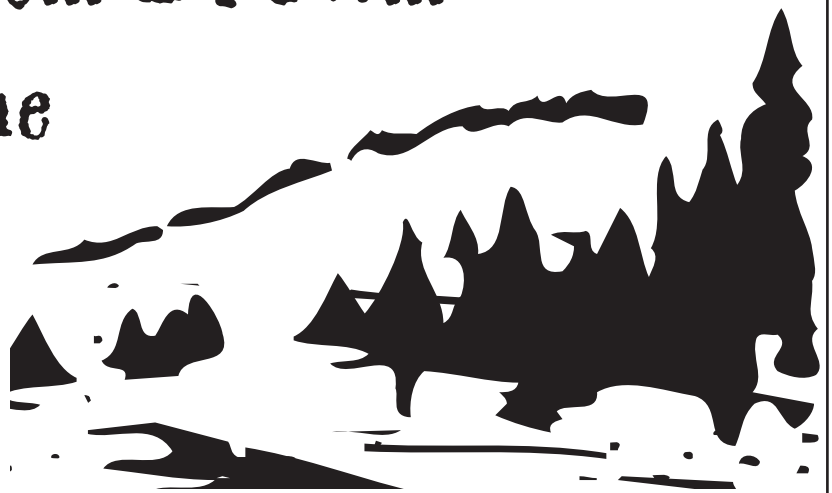
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Incorporating Crime Prevention Techniques into Local Property Management

by Jon Gerondale and Jeff Dowhaniuk, PropertySafe

Tenant screening is an excellent start to increasing the safety and quality of life of a property. If you can weed out problems before they take root and occupy your property, you are off to a tremendous start. But what happens after tenant screening?

Unfortunately, problem tenants find ways around the screening process. In other situations, chances are taken on questionable tenants due to high vacancy rates. It is inevitable that people will be living in or visiting your property that engage in criminal and antisocial behaviors. While you cannot control the moral character of these tenants or visitors, you can enhance your property in ways that deter their criminal behavior.

The advent of community policing recognizes that police agencies cannot prevent crime themselves. Police administrators and academics understand that to establish safe neighborhoods, the assistance of the local community is critical. Police resources are finite and are spread throughout an entire city and county. Your resources as a property owner and manager are specific to your property. It only makes sense for property owners and managers to take the primary responsibility for making their property safe for tenants.

There are three fundamental principles to community policing property owners and managers can adapt to their property management philosophy that promote safe and healthy living environments for their tenants: community involvement, role of disorder, and problem solving. These principles are not mutually exclusive and must work together to be successful. Understanding the importance of, and relationship between, each of these principles significantly increases the effectiveness and efficiency of any property management strategy.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A residential property, whether it is a duplex or 250-unit building, constitutes its own community. This community incorporates a number of people including, but not limited to, tenants, visitors, businesses servicing tenants, local government agencies, property owners, and managers.

It is essential to recognize any property as its own community and involve as many identified community members as possible in establishing a safe living environment. Expecting the police to establish a safe living environment and solve all crime-related problems is an unrealistic expectation.

The police cannot spend unlimited resources on your property. In most cases, police only come to a particular property when called upon for a specific complaint after a problem has already occurred. Tenants, on the other hand, spend significantly more time on the property. It, therefore, makes more sense to have the tenants who collectively occupy the property 24 hours a day define what behaviors are acceptable, then for the police who might spend only a few hours a week on a particular property.

Since police resources are limited, it is imperative to have tenants and other identified community members become actively involved in establishing a healthy property. Expanding the responsibility of crime prevention beyond the police extends ownership in the property and makes the property less attractive for criminal activity.

Individuals who are engaged in criminal behavior are going to live on or visit your property. There is no way around this fact. Property owners and managers can, however, work with the community associated with a property to create an environment that makes criminals feel uncomfortable.

When criminals feel uncomfortable, and legitimate tenants have ownership, those involved in crime will commit their crimes in other locations.

ROLE OF DISORDER

Crime, and the fear of crime, is concentrated in certain locations. Criminals chose to commit crimes in areas where they believe they will not be apprehended. These are locations where there is an apparent inability by the local community to care for itself. This lack of ownership is evident by an increase of disorder in both the physical and social characteristics on the property. These signs of disorder are exhibited in graffiti, litter, abandoned vehicles, property damage, loitering juveniles, and overgrown vegetation.

Properties that display these external signs of disorder are more prone to crime. Criminals are attracted to these locations to commit their crimes because these locations are viewed as areas where tenants are not concerned about what occurs on the property; if residents and police were concerned, they would do something to correct these obvious signs of disorder.

Property owners and managers must recognize the early signs of disorder and find solutions to eliminate it. Failure by property owners and managers to address disorder-related problems early is a choice that will lead to more serious problems in the future.

PROBLEM-SOLVING

Every property is composed of a unique set of characteristics. Projects and programs that are effective for one property might not work in another environment. Problem solving is a process that thoroughly examines the unique factors leading to a specific problem in order to develop a creative solution.

Property owners and managers cannot underestimate the importance of recognizing the early signs of disorder and developing tenant-based solutions to immediately address these problems. To effectively address recurring problems, it is essential to understand the "root" causes of the problem and create holistic solutions that will prevent the same issues from occurring again.

CONCLUSION

Property owners and managers need to be aware of current crime prevention strategies and techniques to address specific concerns. Knowledge is power, and once you understand why crime occurs and how to eliminate recurring problems, solutions are only limited by your imagination.

These basic concepts of community policing have proven effective in combating neighborhood problems. It is time to adapt these public sector principles and apply them to local property management philosophies. Properties that are managed in ways that actively involve tenants in reducing the signs of disorder encourage tenant ownership and improve the quality of life. In the end, this leads to more profitable properties for owners and managers and safer properties for tenants.

Jon Gerondale and Jeff Dowhaniuk are the cofounders of PropertySafe. They work hand in hand with Orca Information Inc.—a premiere background investigation company specializing in employment and tenant screening. To learn more about PropertySafe or Orca Information Inc. go to www.orcainformation.com. There you will find information on PropertySafe and a link to their Web site.

What Can YOU Say About NARPM?

by Cary Efurd

What can *you* say about NARPM? If you are not already super excited about NARPM and cannot offer at least a few superlatives such as fantastic, extraordinary, awesome, enlightening, and encouraging, then you are either a member of a lifeless chapter, have not been attending national events, are not using the resources that the members of NARPM have exhausted themselves to make available for you, or this is simply your first exposure to NARPM.

So, please allow me to inform you that NARPM is all these things: fantastic, extraordinary, awesome, enlightening, encouraging, and more! I am exhilarated, nourished, nurtured, and energized every single day by my membership in NARPM. I continuously receive new ideas, new information in technology, and support from all avenues and venues of "the business." I am so extremely fortunate to be a part of NARPM!

Where do you go when you need a question answered about *black mold*? Where do you go when you need new marketing ideas? Where do you go to find the most reliable help in finding accounting software specific to our industry? Where do you go to just talk to someone who understands "the business"? Where do you go when your business has reached a plateau? Where do you go when you need to find kindling for the fire and passion about your business that once burned deeply in your heart, mind, and soul?

The answer is NARPM members. As a member, *you* are the answer to many of these questions! You have the opportunity to offer information about matters and situations that you have experienced. Answer ques-

tions and get your questions answered. Help us to help *you*! Help NARPM become the best it can become! Come to the next event, find your local chapter and get involved, find a friend, or find a competitor and become his or her friend. NARPM is all that you are, all that you can be, and all that makes you READY and SET to GROW both personally and professionally.

I want to encourage you to get involved. Help with the convention in Salt Lake City, help at your local chapter to bring the best education possible for yourself and your colleagues, help the membership committee reach professionals in your area, but most of all, help yourself! I promise that you will get back more than you give. Give it a try. Share your knowledge, and reap more than you sow. Raising my hand to volunteer took just a little effort, but the benefits far outweigh the work. Being the best *you* can be means being the best for your customers!

Call a NARPM member today, right now! Grab hold of, absorb, use and implement the NARPM advantage into your business. If you are a property manager and do not do this, you will miss one of the most fantastic, extraordinary, awesome, enlightening and encouraging phenomena of a lifetime.

Cary Efurd is a property manager for Century 21 Judge Fite Management Co. Inc. in Dallas, TX. Cary's interest in writing, photography, and communication make him a natural for his current position in market and advertising development. Cary's life theme is to never live a day without enthusiasm and to always serve without thought of self. His motto is "teamwork."

What does NOW have to do with September 21–24, 2005?

**NOW is the time to save these dates for the
17th Annual NARPM Convention and Trade Show.**

NOW is the time to consider booking your flight while the fares are still low.
(expected to increase if the price of fuel continues to escalate)

NOW is the time to plan.
Encourage your colleagues to attend.

NOW is the time to save \$.
With room rates as low as \$89, there is no better time than NOW to make sure you attend!

NOW is the time to check out the NARPM convention Web site to see what has been planned.
This site is constantly being updated as additional arrangements are made so bookmark it and visit it often. Visit www.narpmconvention.com

Ready, Set, Grow!

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 Clear Screening
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 RentGrow Inc
 Residential Asset Management
 Securint
 Summit Real Estate Services LLC

For more affiliate information, please visit www.narpm.org.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome new NARPM members! The following is a list of new members who joined NARPM from February 1 to February 28, 2005.

Cindy Adiutori
 M & R Property Management Co.
 2940 B Union Avenue
 San Jose, CA 95124
 403/371-0705

Skip Anderson
 Riverside Management
 Company, Inc.
 6128 Fairview Avenue
 Boise, ID 83704
 208/376-1616

Paula Bankester
 Coldwell Banker JME Realty
 3541 Beagles Street
 Pensacola, FL 32514
 850/469-9169

M. Keith Bryant
 Realty Management
 Investment Co., Inc.
 809 Moreland Avenue SE
 Atlanta, GA 30316
 404/622-1064

Bill Buffington
 Tristar Realty Group LLC
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 12th Fl
 Tampa, FL 33602
 813/272-9700

Bette Butz
 Bette Butz Realty, Inc.
 407 Wekiva Springs Road, Suite 115
 Longwood, FL 32779
 407/862-9200 x203

David Cruz
 The Right Choice Property
 Management, Inc.
 616 Commonwealth Avenue
 Bronx, NY 10473
 718/512-5098

Lois-Lea Drosten
 Placer Center, Inc.
 21 No. Last Chance Gulch
 Helena, MT 59601
 406/443-4720

Gladys M Fain
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 757/420-0071

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 Aiea, HI 96701
 808/488-0185

Carol Ginoza
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 Honolulu, HI 96826-2159
 808/949-4318

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 Remax Rentals
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 352/597-6997

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 772/343-1117

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 979/233-7828

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 301/439-9500

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 615/280-5100

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 406/543-7368

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 360/533-7100

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Dave Sakamoto
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Louisville, CO 80027
303/926-5255



Ambassador Program 2005

The Ambassador Program was first designed in 2000 to reward our current members for referring new members to our organization. Who better to spread the word of the benefits of NARPM than its members? If you refer five new members in one year, you will receive an award certificate that may be used toward your next year's dues or for events for the coming year. When you achieve ambassador status and receive your \$195 NARPM credit, it can be used toward your annual dues or registration at a NARPM National Convention. It is flexible! Just follow the simple steps outlined here:

- ★ Call NARPM Headquarters at 800/782-3452, and request membership application forms. Headquarters, upon request, will mail the application directly to the prospective member but will not fill in the "referred by" line.
- ★ The 12-month period to obtain the five new members starts the day the first new membership application is processed by headquarters.
- ★ When Headquarters receives the fifth new membership application, an Award Certificate will be issued and dated. A recognition certificate will also be issued, and you, as the "Ambassador," will be recognized in the *Residential Resource*.
- ★ The Award Certificate can be used to pay NARPM annual dues, or like amount can be applied toward National Convention.
- ★ It must be used in full at the time of use and attached to your dues or registration for Convention. The value of the Award Certificate is equal to what the national dues were at the time the Award Certificate was issued. It also must be used within 12 months of the issue date.
- ★ A member can earn multiple Award Certificates in the 12-month period.

AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

February 2005 New Members

New Member

Cindy Adiutori

Gladys Fain

Roxanna Faith

Elaine Farley

Karen Gray

Vicki Jo Hash

David Hoessly

Niki Inglis

Beth Ivey

Kari Kimball

Michael Mino

Jim Peacock

Daren Roberts

Jay Silva

Sav Singh-Sewsankar

Ali Speed

Ambassador Member

Rick L Raich, RMP®

Jenny Frady

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Chuck Warren

Linda A Wilson

Fred Thompson RMP

Renee Quinn, GRI, TAR, VPAR, DPM

Tina M Bradley

Meghan O'Brien

Maris Mills

Harold Kalles, MPM®

Dave Fletcher, RMP®

Jeanne Roberts

Jill Childs-Mynarcik

Renee Quinn, GRI, TAR, VPAR, DPM

David E Kadleck

NARPM STORE

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NARPM is delighted to announce a brand new, hot-off-the-press book, the *Unofficial Guide to Managing Rental Property*, written by one of NARPM's very own past presidents, Melissa Prandi, MPM®.

You can purchase the book at the NARPM store for the *hot off the press special rate* of \$17 plus tax. Contact NARPM at 800/782-3452 or info@narpm.org

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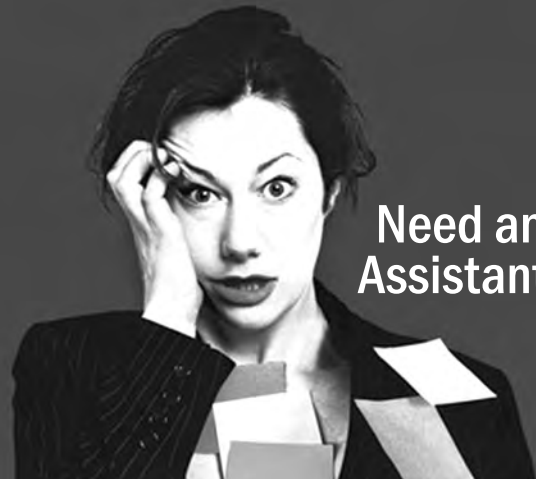
Submit an Article to NARPM Today!

Help us keep you and other members informed by writing an article that shares your story, experience, or expertise. It is easy to submit. Just e-mail your submission for review to publications@narpm.org. If you are not the author of any materials you think pertinent, send us the Web link, a copy of the article via e-mail or fax a copy along with publication information so we can pursue reprint rights for use of the materials.

Contribute to the Residential Resource

<u>Issue Date</u>	<u>Submission Due Date</u>
July 2005	May 15, 2005
August 2005	June 15, 2005
September/October	July 15, 2005

If you are interested in writing an article, please e-mail an attachment of your article in Word or text format to publications@narpm.org or send her a Word or text file on 3-1/2" diskette to P.O. Box 140647, Austin, TX 78714-0647. All articles are subject to editing and approval of subject matter.



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2005 RMP®/MPM® Certification Classes

Date	Location	Class	Instructor
May 20-21, 2005	Boise, ID	MPM® Risk Management	Dave Holt, MPM®
June 10, 2005	Boise, ID	RMP® Operations	Suzanne Cameron, MPM®

To register for classes, complete the registration form and mail or fax with payment to NARPM Headquarters.

†Registration form below is not applicable for Ethics class.

For more information or to receive Ethics registration form, call Headquarters at 800/782-3452.

Interested in Sponsoring Certification Classes?

Opportunities are available to chapters that would like to further member education, promote certification, and increase their chapter funds by sponsoring a certification class. However, it takes time to plan a class—so give your chapter five to six month's lead-time if you wish to sponsor one of these events.

Find out more by calling Peter Meer, MPM®, at 303/322-1550 or e-mailing meerandco@aol.com. Peter can provide you with the details you need to make a Certification class a successful venture.

RMP®/MPM® Class Registration

FEES	Early Registration*	Registration*
RMP® Classes		
Member	\$195.00	\$225.00
Nonmember	\$250.00	\$280.00
Retake	\$100.00	\$130.00
RMP®/MPM® designee	\$97.50	\$127.50

MPM® Classes	Early Registration*	Registration*
Member	\$395.00	\$450.00
Nonmember	\$450.00	\$505.00
Retake	\$300.00	\$355.00
MPM®	\$197.50	\$252.50

* To receive the early registration price payment must be post-marked, faxed, or e-mailed 30 days prior to the class.

CLASS INFORMATION

- On-site registration begins at 8:00 a.m. Class hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- RMP® classes qualify for 6 hours of NARPM certification.
- MPM® classes qualify for 12 hours of NARPM certification.
- All materials will be given to students on the day of the class.
- All attendees are required to make their individual hotel reservations.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Cancellations must be received in writing. If cancellation notice is received at least 30 days prior to the class, a full refund will be issued less a \$25 processing fee. If cancellation notice is received less than 30 days before the class, a 50% refund will be issued. No refunds will be made on the day of class; however, the registration fee can be applied to a later class with a \$25 transfer fee.

Due to low registration, a class may be cancelled with 15 days prior notice. If NARPM cancels a class, registration fee could be credited to a future class or fully refunded upon request.

(Please print or type)

Name _____

Company _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____

E-mail _____

List Classes

Name of class	Class Date	Cost
_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____
Total		\$ _____

Method of Payment

I have enclosed a check for \$_____ Ck/M.O. # _____ Date _____

Please charge my credit card in the amount of \$_____ as follows:

Visa MasterCard Discover American Express

Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____

Name of Cardholder _____

Billing Address _____

Signature _____

I authorize NARPM to charge my credit card.

Two Easy Ways to Register

1. MAIL your form with payment to NARPM, P.O. Box 140647, Austin, TX 78714-0647.

2. FAX your form with credit card payment to 512/454-3036. Please do not mail the original.



**P.O. Box 140647
Austin, TX 78714-0647**

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**MARK YOUR CALENDAR
FOR THESE IMPORTANT
NARPM DATES!**

***Future NARPM National
Convention and Trade Shows***

September 21–24, 2005
Salt Lake City, UT (Little America Hotel)

September 27–30, 2006
Burlington, VT (Sheraton Hotel)

September 26–29, 2007
Scottsdale, AZ (Sunburst Resort)



STRONG CHAPTER TIP

TIPS FROM THE PRESIDENT

TIP #4:

Promote social events. Building strong relationships, both business and personal, within the membership of individual chapters, is essential to a strong vibrant chapter. An excellent way to build strong individual relationships is to host social events that are not directly related to business. In lieu of a formal meeting, dedicate two monthly chapter meetings each year for social gatherings. Examples are:

December, host a holiday party; June, host a picnic at the local lake for water skiing and swimming; January, meet at the ski hill for a day of snow skiing or tubing. The possibilities are limitless. Include the families of the NARPM members, as they are a major contributor to their success.

Another great event is having a member host a social gathering at his/her office. This is a great opportunity to visualize how similar we are and will go along way to build that strong individual relationship. Lasting friendships within the chapter will enhance the success of your chapter—people will be eager for the next meeting.