



LEN HARJALA, FMP, SFP

How did you get into FM/ Accidental FM?

I have quite a varied background: BS in Biology, speak 6 languages and used to work in the U.S. Government and the U.S. Army, so I'm an "Accidental FM". I joined IFMA in 2001, while working as a Telecommunications and Facilities Assistant at Welch Allyn in Beaverton Oregon in 2001. I was waiting on another government job to open in 2001 and applied for the Facilities Assistant position at Welch Allyn and was hired. It's been a long and exciting career ever since. I've been able to use my troubleshooting skills and military veteran experience (I was in Military Intelligence and worked as a Russian translator) to help me succeed in FM. My biology degree has come in handy in FM areas such as LEED, sustainability, and pest control. FM has been a challenging career field: every day is different, you meet a lot of diverse people, and encounter new building issues all the time.

One off weird experience in the industry

Early in my career, I was contacted by employees about a slow sink drain in a women's restroom. I had to contact a plumber to take apart the p-trap and piping underneath the sink to fully clear the clog. The clog was caused by six squid (about 4"-6" long) that someone had likely pushed into the sink drain on purpose as a prank, but they would have had to use plumbing wrenches to get the sink drain cover off to push the squid into the pipe. Another experience: working in an actual haunted building in Beaverton. It's a long story, so feel free to ask me in person sometime! And the paranormal activity was witnessed by 6 other employees including myself.

A highlight of your Facility or Operation

I currently work for Hitachi High-Tech America, Inc. in Hillsboro and am responsible for 300,000 SF locally and 13 other sites in North America. Hitachi recently opened a new 200,000 SF facility in Hillsboro, and it's a state-of-the-art facility with several ongoing challenges.

