

## Wireless Technology

A packed house at Villa Christina gave a warm welcome to Paul Ziek as he presented "Wireless Facility Management Technology" (despite that he hails from New Jersey and admitted to being a Mets fan). Paul is a project manager for Savant Services Corporation, a New York-based project management and advisory firm, is a frequent speaker at industry conferences and is a published author on this subject.

The quote of the day: "It is better to be the FM that knows about these (wireless) technologies than to have a vendor or your boss tell you about them." The implications of that statement kept many on the edge of their seats during the presentation laced with humor and real life application examples.

Paul contends we are in a stage of exploration and very early in the bell curve of adoption of wireless technology, not only in FM, but in many applications. Wireless is a natural progression of the PC and Internet. Now, that so many companies are investing heavily in bringing to market new technologies and "chips," prices are going down and quality is increasing.

The tactical benefits of Wireless Facility Management include: cost savings, increased productivity, improved staff planning, improved inventory control, customer service benefits, and improved communications. "Currently, engineers, operators, managers and technicians are bound by tethered workstations. For example, in order to make serious adjustments to climate, lighting or energy consumption, someone must interface with a PC that is connected to the building automation unit via Ethernet or the Internet. However, WiFi-equipped handheld devices allow mobile control over automated building management systems. All that is available on the central workstation is also available on the WiFi-networked laptop, handheld or PC tablet. Therefore, an employee can make adjustments standing wherever they may be...instead of running to some corner room in a basement.

To take this thought a step further, possibilities abound. Remember that today, handhelds and laptops have the same ability as many PC workstations. So, the same handheld device that enables control over a VAV, boiler, chiller etc. will also allow access to asset management software. Thus, maintenance requests and equipment orders can also be done from the field immediately. Daily tasks will be completed without the threat of lost paperwork or miscommunication between the employee, client and the central office. Efficiency will take on a whole new meaning" (quoted from his article "*Present versus Future*").

From WiFi, 3G, WiMax, Bluetooth, RFID, SPOT, and others technologies, Paul stressed that the technology is here, and it is up to us to embrace it and take advantage of its benefits. The impact on buildings and office planning has yet to be fully defined but there is already a movement among equipment and service suppliers to work together to ensure interoperability of the various options (e.g., VoWLAN). Building preparation, product evolution, security and our mindsets are the potholes in the road not yet paved.