

A Brief History Of ARC Water Treatment

Ed Goldstein was working with The Metropolitan Refining Company as their representative in Philadelphia in 1960 when people in the water filter business hatched the idea of selling HVAC water treatment. This led to his forming a partnership with Joe Cohen to create Arc Water Treatment Company. The name relates to their first location on Arch Street in Philadelphia, and they spun off from the water filter business on May 1, 1963 to create the new company that would specialize in the new water treatment industry.

The business grew in Philadelphia, gaining lots of clients and a reputation for preventive maintenance, as Ed convinced building owners and managers that treating the water circulating in their HVAC systems would prevent future corrosive degradations. Ed's chemical engineering degree served him well in building this new business, as he developed a reputation among design and consulting engineers, and mechanical contractors to specify water treatment as part of new building design. Of course, as an entrepreneur building a new business, he learned the many additional skills needed to manage employees, customers, and to make it a profitable business for the long haul. Ed's son David was completing his education at the University of Maryland, and the two of them saw an opportunity to expand Arc's HVAC water treatment into the growing Washington DC metropolitan area. So Arc began reaching out geographically into Maryland in 1978, and undertook special projects for a concrete molding company and a major insurance company. This led to the establishment of an office in Beltsville, MD in the summer of 1980, just as David graduated and he began working as a full time salesman for Arc on September 1, 1980.

Arc quickly expanded at the Maryland location, partly by acquiring the accounts of the local Metropolitan Refining Company representative (who was based in Alexandria) and the business of a local water treatment company. Some of these acquired accounts have remained as clients of Arc to this day. The service model for all these clients was now a full service, Nordstrom-type relationship, wherein Arc Technicians would deliver chemicals, test HVAC system water, apply appropriate amounts of treatment chemicals, and repeat this biweekly to assure the customer that their systems were running efficiently. Later they introduced automated controllers to better control water and chemical usage for cooling towers, and that enabled a change to monthly service visits.

One of Arc's neighboring businesses in the Beltsville office was to become a major mechanical contractor in the DC region, and David worked closely with them on new projects, which became the model for further growing the Arc business. Ed and David worked with design engineers to create a well-documented set of specifications for water treatment systems, complete with drawings and installation instructions, which engineers could incorporate into new building design. These became the high standard for the construction industry, and Arc was the sole bidder on many new construction jobs to provide the water treatment equipment and warranty service. This often led to continuing relationships with building owners and managers who retained Arc for the water treatment service for many years.

Arc outgrew the Beltsville location, and moved to Jessup in June 1990, with a larger warehouse for mixing more proprietary water treatment chemicals. Ed had worked with experts in the industry to create a variety of chemicals for cooling towers, closed loop systems, and steam boilers, so Arc now had products that would protect all hydronic systems for customers, year round. The Jessup location also enabled Arc to provide better service to Baltimore clients, as the client base expanded throughout the two city region. The emphasis was still on quality service and prevention, and Ed, David and Joe Cohen gave seminars to engineers at industry gatherings or in small groups throughout the mid-Atlantic.

Also in 1990, a natural separation grew between the two Arc Water Treatment businesses. It was clear that the two families were going in different directions, so Ed and Joe agreed to separate the businesses by territory, with Joe retaining the original Philadelphia client base. Ed was now firmly committed to growing the "southern" operation, and Arc Water Treatment Company of Maryland was formed in 1990 to do that. By then he and David had hired Eric Hagen as another full time salesman (in 1988, along with Chuck Light as a technical sales/serviceman) and the staff had expanded to 14, including sales, service and office personnel.

Ed continued to manage Arc Water Treatment Company of Maryland through the next ten years, while David concentrated on developing relationships with mechanical contractors. This was a highly successful strategy as the Washington DC area enjoyed a building boom and Arc grew along with the economy of the region. The first decade of the 21st century saw the successful transition of the firm from founder Ed to son.