

Book Review Editor: Theodore J. Wiedner, Ph.D., P.E., AIA

Hard to believe, it's been

ten full years since I took over this column from John Casey, a mentor and colleague. I've enjoyed every minute of the assignment and while I may threaten to transfer the workload, I'll hang on for a while longer because of the benefits. I get to read a lot of books and share my perspective. I choose which books I review although many are suggested to me by publishers. Occasionally, a volunteer reviews a book and I provide editorial guidance, but that's it. If you have the urge to write a review, don't be bashful; it's rewarding. If you don't know what to read, e-mail or call me and I can help you find a book to suit your needs.

To start the new year I suggest two books: one that's mostly operational and one that's mostly design and construction; two from APPA's main subject areas. Both provide solutions to our everyday work.

Best wishes in the new decade.

THE UNTHINKABLE: WHO SURVIVES WHEN DISASTER STRIKES – AND WHY

Amanda Ripley, Crown Publishers, New York, 2008, 207 pages, hardcover, \$29.95 (softcover, audio, and Kindle editions also available).

Emergency preparedness has become yet another job requirement for the modern facility officer at a college or university. Some have procedures in place that are better than others, just look at how well the University of Texas at Austin responded on September 28, 2010 when they had a shooter on campus. They learned from their own sad experience in 1967. But not all of us have

the opportunity to learn from personal or institutional history. And besides, do we really want to learn the hard way every time?

So the norm is now, being prepared for an emergency. Whether it's a hurricane, flood, tornado, shooter, vehicular accident, explosion, or other event, we're all expected to respond quickly and effectively to protect the institution and its occupants. If we don't, an endless line of reporters asking why we hadn't foreseen the problem; why we didn't respond more quickly; or why we didn't have effective procedures to shelter in place, shelter off-site, evacuate, or other means of refuge.

In *The Unthinkable*, Amanda Ripley draws from several news accounts and digs into the details of the event, what when wrong, what when right, and why it mattered. How were people saved and why the deeds of heroes and ordinary folks mattered. In some cases, disasters are chronicled (how many people died, was the death preventable or inevitable). In most of the cases prevented the deaths could have been prevented had people paid attention to the emergency plans, and followed them.

Sadly, many of the examples are too real. They are also frustrating because they could have been prevented had people reacted differently; paid attention to announcements, followed instructions, or acted rather than procrastinating. In other cases, people survived because their primal instincts took over and they were protected because of a primitive response to danger. However, a primal response doesn't always work in our modern, technological society. Plans and contingencies must be practiced over and over again.

Like you, I've attended periodic emergency scenarios conducted by our police department, the unit charged with coordinating many emergency manage-

ment responses. These are somewhat routine for me because I've learned how to respond to emergencies the hard way – several fires, floods, auto accidents, and falls, some resulting in death.

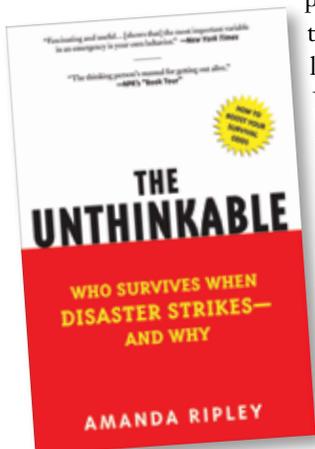
Others in these practice sessions don't do so well, they're bosses who think they know how to lead people even in an emergency (news flash - they're not facilities people and they don't handle emergencies well). The practices are important for me and for them: they gain a greater understanding of what it means to operate a facility in all conditions, and I develop new connections with folks when they see how things are done working through the scenario with the cops. It's a good system.

I've also received the introductory FEMA training plus some other training. Every time, the importance of practicing these different scenarios comes up. It may seem dull at first but it's just like an athletic talent, if you don't practice and hone the skills you won't win when it's time to perform. *Unthinkable* is a valuable book for the doubters and the believers. It's good for the "pointy-haired boss" who thinks he knows what to do in all cases. More importantly, it's important for the individual who thinks all planes are alike and they don't need to pay attention to the FAA required announcements before every take-off.

If you read this book, you'll be a survivor. Not the TV kind, but a real, emergency situation, never-happen-again-in-your-lifetime, survivor. I want you to be a survivor.

THE OWNER'S DILEMMA: DRIVING SUCCESS AND INNOVATION IN THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Barbara White Bryson with Cana Yetmen, Greenway Communications, Atlanta, GA, 2010, 237 pages, softcover, \$29.95.

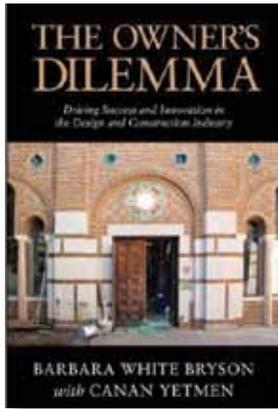


When I was studying architecture, the movie *The Towering Inferno* appeared on the big screen. It was the time of disaster movies and here was another one where a poorly constructed building catches fire and the architect uses his intimate knowledge of the building to save as many people as possible. What a crazy story—no architect knows a massive building to the level of detail needed. That's Hollywood for you.

Buildings are complex and construction projects don't run smoothly without a lot of care and attention. The challenge is managing the risk and the owner has the most at risk. The building must fill the need or a great deal of money will be wasted. In the case of a university, the owner is not the occupant(s) who may have been involved in design reviews. The oversight board is the owner, and most of the time they're not involved in the process, where the risk is the greatest. The board relies on the project management staff to deliver the complex project on time, within budget, and to the satisfaction of the occupants.

The Owner's Dilemma makes the challenges abundantly clear. Why would anyone want to assume the pressure of managing a risky construction project for a board that wants to make sure there are no mistakes. Of course, many of us are in the position, or have been, and want to make sure the board members are happy while keeping the occupants happy, too. It's a tough balancing act and one which requires many skills. These skills are articulated in the later chapters and thoughtful examples of construction projects appear at the end of each chapter.

While the book rose out of an upper-level course that the author was challenged to teach, it does an excellent job of putting the problems and risks in



perspective. Clear recommendations are provided with examples. While many of the examples are a record of personal experiences in a somewhat rarified setting (Rice University), they are not unique. We all experience many of the problems presented, but may not have

succeeded as well as the author and Rice University have under her leadership. Therein lies the lesson. This is a book I've enjoyed reading and learning from. You will too. 💰

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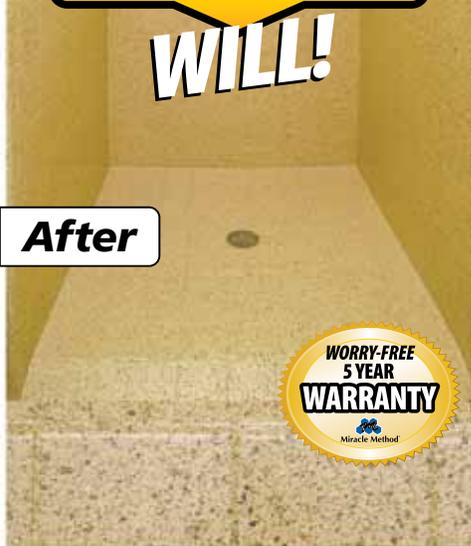
Leaking tile showers?

Re-grouting won't fix the problem.





Before



After



	MIRASEAL	VS.	RE-GROUTING	
SERVICE:				
Permanently Seal Grout	✔ Yes		✘ No	
Remove Water Under Tile	✔ Yes		✘ No	
Eliminate Grout Maint.	✔ Yes		✘ No	
Repair Cracked Tile	✔ Yes		✘ No	
Change Tile & Grout Color	✔ Yes		✘ No	

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- Richard Smith
Asst Dir of Housing & Residential Life
Florida Atlantic University



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