



# ITEMS

NEWSLETTER

December 2002



## Demand for Plumbing Products to Reach \$9.8 Billion by 2006

### U.S. Plumbing Products Demand (in millions of dollars)

	1996	2001	2006	% Annual Growth	
				1996-2001	2001-2006
Plumbing Products Demand	6861	8414	9800	4.2	3.1
Plumbing Fittings	3687	4379	5050	3.5	2.9
Plumbing Fixtures	3174	4035	4750	4.9	3.3

Source: The Freedonia Group and Supply House Times

"As we see it, there is just no alternative to long-term growth in our market areas, particularly the far west and southwest," says Wixson. AB&I's growth projections are based on demographic trends that show a rapid influx of population into California and the southwest. "Between retirees moving to warmer climates and immigrant populations joining friends and family in the west, we see steady growth in our region as far into the future as our crystal ball can look," says Wixson.

The preference for quality plumbing products by affluent, older consumers is a big plus for cast iron sales. Many consumers are recognizing the advantages of using cast iron DWV in upstairs bath applications, thereby eliminating the in-wall "woosh" sound of flushing toilets and draining showers. "Wherever there's a preference for quality, cast iron wins," says Wixson.

In spite of current market conditions that many are calling lackluster, the longer-term outlook for plumbing supplies remains firmly optimistic, with solid growth projected across the category.

According to the Freedonia Group, a leading industrial market research firm, demand for plumbing products in the United States is expected to grow by 3.1% per year through 2006. This growth will produce sales approaching \$9.8 billion in the final year of these projections, a significant increase even over the boom years of the late '90s.

"We're not at all surprised by these figures," says Kip Wixson, AB&I vice president. AB&I has projected solid growth

in plumbing supplies sales for the foreseeable future, particularly in the western United States, where income and population trends bode well for construction in general.

According to the Freedonia report, much of the growth will come from the home improvement market, with aging consumers preferring quality-oriented additions. Other growth areas include non-residential construction, which is expected to surge after a relatively brief respite from the torrid increases seen in the last decade.

Freedonia also projects growth rates in the the West and South to exceed the national average of 3.1%, a trend supported by AB&I's internal sales growth estimates for the coming years.

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Kip Wixson



Perspective

# Do Our Elections Tell Us More About Ourselves Than We Really Want to Know?

Whether your favorites won the last election or came in second, I think we can all agree that we're glad it's over. Tens of millions of dollars were spent by political wannabes and their supporters all over the country, some to tell us how great a candidate was, but most (it seems) to blast us with the corruption, immorality, and incompetence of the other guy. No expense was spared on TV, radio, newspapers, direct mail and pesky phone calls to either: 1) Get us out to vote for Mr./Ms. America, or 2) Disillusion us so much we decide to sit the election out, thereby giving the advantage to the one doing the disillusioning.

Somehow, I don't think that's what our founders had in mind when they dumped tea into Boston Harbor and picked up arms against the Brits. Though campaigns and elections in early America were spirited and not without mischief, none of the signers of the constitution could have imagined the depths to which modern politicians would stoop to get elected. They could not have foreseen the day when a man would spend \$40 million of his own money to run for an office that paid \$100,000 a year. They would doubtless have frowned on a national leader taking bribes in the form of cash and Italian suits, and would probably be none too pleased with corporations and unions pouring millions into campaign treasuries with the expectation of massive returns that would make Don Corleone blush. But most of all, I fear, they would be disappointed in us; you, me and our next door neighbor, for allowing our system to get so far out of hand, so far from the ideals of the early days.

Less than 50% of Americans take the time to register to vote. Of those, under half actually vote on election day. In tight races, like we've seen lately, the winner takes it with just over 50% of the voters. Doing the math, that means that just over 12% of eligible voters in this country put people into power, with a staggering 88% either not participating or seeing their candidates lose. 12% choose the people who will run our schools, fix our roads, protect us from bad guys, levy our taxes, make treaties with other countries, and tell us how much water we can use when we flush our toilets.

The talking heads on Sunday morning have different ideas about why voter turnout is so low. Some say Americans are too apathetic to vote. Things are going fine in their lives so why bother. Others say voters are turned off by the process. Billionaires running against millionaires with ideas hardly worth a dime don't inspire large numbers of people to go to the poles. "My vote won't really matter," is a common theme heard among the 50% who don't even register.

Now, as far as the first group is concerned, I say no problem. If things are so great that voting is just a bothersome chore, do us all a favor and stay home. Likewise for people who don't want to spend a little time educating themselves about the issues and candidates. It's probably better that Joe Blow not throw a dart at the ballot to choose our next president or governor or dog catcher. My advice is, if you can't think, don't vote.

The second group troubles me. Those otherwise interested citizens who have lost faith in the system so they stay home on election day are the water circling the drain of our American experiment. The founders would be ashamed that we've let so many people get so frustrated that they resign their franchise, choosing instead to live apart from their government as much as possible, relinquishing power to those they see as 'insiders' who will win anyway, no matter what the voters do.

The stakes are just too high to let bright Americans sit out elections out of sheer frustration with the system. Issues of war and peace, life and death, and plumbing standards face our elected leaders every day. Americans today are spending more on taxes than they are on food, clothing and shelter combined. That's right, combined. Hard to believe? Think about it. Income tax, social security and medicare tax, sales tax, property tax, federal excise tax, gas tax, tax on utilities, capital gains tax, not to mention the higher prices we pay to vendors and suppliers whose prices have to reflect their cost of doing business, which is impacted greatly by the taxes they have to pay. It's a vicious cycle, but the bottom line is that we're working 4-6 months a year just to pay taxes. It would be nice if more

intelligent people participated in the electoral process so that these tax dollars could either be reduced or, at least, spent as efficiently as possible. With only 12% deciding on our leaders, I'm not at all confident that we're doing the best we can. Somebody once said that in a democracy, the people get the government they deserve. They're probably right, but the people who say that, as Americans, we can change the way things are with the mark of a ballot are right, too.

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We went to two trade shows last month, the ASPE show in Dallas, and the ISH (ASA) show in Toronto. ASPE was good, pretty well attended, and our primary market was well represented. Dallas in the Spring is nice place, easy to get in and out of. All-in-all, ASPE remains a good venue for us to do business.

ISH was another story. Though the organizers really tried hard to bring value to the exhibitors and attendees alike, attendance was off and enthusiasm was generally lacking. I talked to several manufacturers who seemed a little disgruntled at the attendance, but let's face it, this isn't a barnburner year for the plumbing business and many companies are keeping their show dollars in their pockets. Also, I'm not sure Toronto is the best city for a major test like ISH. Maybe a city in the middle of the US would have been better. ASA is looking hard to find answers to their problems, but I don't think ISH was it. We wish them well.

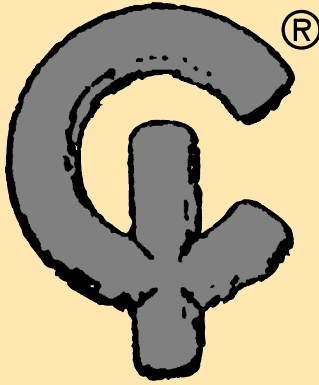
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If any of you are like me and you are more than a little annoyed with the direction that professional and big-time college sports has taken, don't give up yet. Check out the story on the back page. Just when it seemed that arrogance, sneers, offensive gestures, endzone spikes, fan abuse, in-your-face dances and other unsportsmanlike behavior rule the day, along come a couple of coaches from some midwest schools who quietly remind us what all the hoopla is about.

Have a merry and safe holiday season. See you all next year!



## The Cast Iron Soil Pipe Institute: Over a Half Century of Service



The Cast Iron Soil Pipe Institute (CISPI) was organized in 1949 by the leading American manufacturers of cast iron soil pipe and fittings. The goal of the Institute is to aid and improve the plumbing industry by ensuring that member manufacturers produce their products to the highest standards, to achieve standardization of cast iron pipe and fittings, and to educate the plumbing market about the features and benefits of cast iron as a plumbing material.

Through the preparation and distribution of technical reports, CISPI also seeks to advance interest in the manufacture, use and distribution of cast iron soil pipe and fittings. CISPI performs unannounced inspections on all member foundries three times each year to verify that the rigorous quality standards set by CISPI are being met.

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***"We're strong believers in CISPI, and appreciate the service that they have provided the plumbing industry over the years."***

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Plumbing specifiers, installers and owners are encouraged to look for the CISPI logo on all cast iron pipe and fittings. This logo provides strong evidence that the product so marked meets all applicable standards, and that the foundry that produced the material supports a strong industry voice in ensuring quality.

"We're strong believers in CISPI and appreciate the service that they have provided the plumbing industry over the years," says AB&I vice president, Kip Wixson. "CISPI has done more to promote quality and standardization than any other industry group, and we're proud of our long affiliation with this outstanding organization.

Since the founding of the Institute, member firms have standardized soil pipe and fittings, and have introduced a number of new products. Assurance that pipe and fittings meet the approved standards and tolerances of the Institute is provided either by  $\Phi$ ®; or the CI NO-HUB® trademarks which are the collective marks all member companies may place on their products.

### ***Team Member Spotlight*** **Brennan Carpenter**

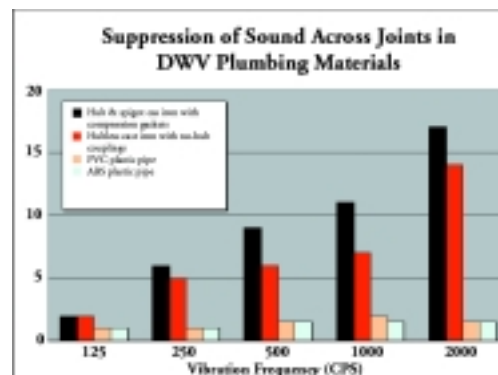
The newest addition to the AB&I sales team is Brennan Carpenter. Brennan joined AB&I nearly a year ago, and has been tasked with calling on distributors as well as plumbing and mechanical contractors throughout Northern California to introduce them to AB&I products and to respond to their special needs.

"We're excited to have Brennan aboard," says AB&I sales manager, Greg Seiler. "We've asked Brennan to put an extra push in calling on the contractor market. He's done a great job taking care of the distributors in his area as well as driving contractors' cast iron business to those distributors.

Brennan can be reached at 800-GOT-IRON, or by cell phone at 510/703-9863.

Welcome aboard, Brennan!

### ***Laboratory Test Show Cast Iron DWV Quieter Than Plastic***



CISPI - Recent tests conducted by an independent research firm, Polysonics Acoustical Engineers of Washington, D.C., found that cast iron pipe and fittings suppressed noise significantly better than either PVC or ABS plastic materials.

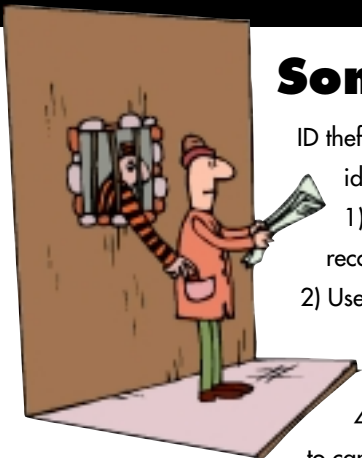
The recorded data revealed vibration reductions as high as 12 decibels per joint in hub and spigot cast iron pipe, and as high as 9 decibels in hubless pipe with elastometric gaskets and stainless steel shields (the human ear can detect a sound level of 3 decibels).

Cast iron hub and spigot and hubless

materials resulted in vibration reduction four and three times greater per joint than our ability to detect those vibrations. ABS and PVC thermoplastic piping materials showed no meaningful vibration reduction across joints. Cast iron pipe and fittings clearly "out-silence" these plastic piping materials.



## Some Tips on Avoiding Identity Theft



ID theft is one of the fastest growing crimes, and affects millions of Americans. Here are some ideas for keeping your identity (and your credit cards!) safe from crooks:

- 1) Photocopy everything in your wallet and keep the copy in a safe place. If your wallet gets stolen, you'll have a record of what was in it and can cancel all cards quickly.
- 2) Use a PO box as the address on your checks, and list your work phone instead of your home phone.
- 3) Don't print your social security number on any document you carry, ever. If your bank or another agency needs it, you can give it to them on a case-by-case basis.
- 4) Have the toll free numbers for all your credit cards in a handy, safe place, so you can call them immediately to cancel your credit if your wallet gets lost or stolen.

5) In case of loss, call the three major credit reporting agencies immediately to place a fraud alert. Their telephone numbers are as follows:

Experian: 888/397-3742 | Equifax: 800/685-1111 | TransUnion: 800/888-4213

### The Meaning of Sportsmanship...

*We found this story so important that we decided to suspend the jokes section for just this issue and run this article in its place. For our loyal jokes fans, please forgive the interruption.*

## Northwest and Waverly Remind Us of the True Spirit of Sport

In an age where arrogance and "Sharpie" pens steal the national spotlight, it is often the smallest, most unnoticed acts of kindness that remind us that football is, after all, just a game.

This story, which is destined to become legend in Southern Ohio circles, starts in Waverly.

Northwest football coach Dave Frantz and Tigers' coach Derek DeWitt shared a conversation the week before the game. But the two coaches weren't discussing strategy. Instead, they were talking about a mentally handicapped Northwest player by the name of Jake Porter.

Porter, a senior, has a disorder called "Chromosomal Fragile X," the most common cause of inherited mental retardation. Though handicapped, Porter still shows up for practice every day and dresses in full gear during games, but he has yet to take a snap during official play. Coach Frantz wanted that streak to stop the next Friday.

"I told them (Waverly) ahead of time that Porter can't take a hit or anything," Frantz said. "If the game is not at stake on the last play," he said, "I wanted him to come in and take a knee." But a week later, with Waverly leading 42-0 with five seconds remaining, Coach DeWitt offered Coach Frantz one better.

"During the timeout, DeWitt met me in the middle of the field and said, 'We'll let him score,' Frantz explained. "At first I said, 'Nah,'" he explained, "then we talked about it with the referees, and they said, 'Hey coach, we understand.'" What soon followed will forever go down in Southern Ohio football lore.

At Waverly's 49-yard line, Porter entered the game at tailback and had his play, "84-ISO," called in the huddle. When the ball was snapped, an unforgettable moment in sport began to unfold. As the excited and no-doubt nervous Porter took the ball, all 21 players on the field parted ways. Porter was somewhat surprised when he slowly walked through the huge hole. At first, he turned back around to face the original line of scrimmage, but everyone on the field - including the defensive players from Waverly - pointed and guided Porter towards the Tigers' end zone.

"When we practiced that play, he was supposed to down it, so I think he was a little confused at first," Northwest tailback Zach Smith said. "But once he figured it out, he took off."

The 49-yard trek to glory took about 10-12 seconds in all, and was culminated by the players on both sidelines cheering and running step-for-step with Porter to the end zone.

Tears flowed from the bleachers well into the night, and the life of one young man was changed forever.

"At Waverly, we didn't

do anything special. We were just happy to be a part of it," a humbled DeWitt said. "That young man was just excited to get the ball. Our guys didn't care about the shutout; those stats went out the window. When you're involved in a moment like that, you want to make sure you end the game with class, decency and respect." Those who play football on the highest levels should take notice.

It's interesting to note that even ESPN carried this story, featuring it prominently in the *Play of the Day* segment, proving that even the jaded media can be touched by the presence of grace in sport.

When interviewed about her son's day, Porter's mother said that there was no way she ever thought she'd see her son do such a thing as score in an official game. It seems that Coaches DeWitt and Frantz changed more than one life on that day. Maybe far more.

