



ITEMS

NEWSLETTER

December 2004

Gregg Carr Tagged for Important New Marketing Role

AB&I Backs Commitment to Distributors by Adding New Product Engineering Specialist



"It took us a while to find just the right guy, but Gregg should fill the bill." So said AB&I vice president, Kip Wixson, during the recent introduction of the newest AB&I marketing team member, Gregg Carr. Gregg has been selected to fill a critical new and long planned-for role at AB&I, that of Product Engineering Specialist. Greg will spend full time calling on engineers and other job specifiers throughout the AB&I marketing territory, providing much-needed information on the merits and benefits of domestic cast iron DWV, and the AB&I product line in particular.

"We've known for years that this [engineering-related] job was vital to AB&I's continued leadership in the market," said Gary

Wickham, plumbing division manager. While the AB&I sales team has long devoted a portion of their work week to calling on plumbing engineers, the need for a full-time specialist has become evident in recent times, due largely to the misinformation and shoddy product that has been introduced into the

market by importers and others more interested in turning a quick buck than in serving their customers well. Carr will be in contact with the engineer and specifier markets on a daily basis to make sure they understand the implications of their product decisions.

"I'm excited about my new position," said Carr, a veteran sales and marketing professional with decades of experience calling on major accounts. "My mission will be to educate the market about the advantages of domestic cast iron DWV, and that how specifying an inferior product can really bite. My job is to make sure AB&I products are either specified or

allowed in every building project," says Carr.

When not working, Gregg Carr spends time on his Apache Junction horse ranch with his wife and two kids, where he pursues his lifelong passion of living the Western lifestyle. He is a certified National Mounted Instructor, teaching law enforcement personnel how to utilize horses in their patrol and other duties. He is also on the board of the National Mounted Officers Association.

If you're a plumbing engineer or product specifier, plan to see Gregg in the coming months. You'll recognize him right away; he's the big guy with the Stetson and a horse tied up in your lobby. Or maybe he'll show up in a hazmat suit (like he did on a recent sales call to reinforce the safety features of cast iron). Either way, you'll get to know him, and will learn a little about cast iron pipe and fittings along the way, too.

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Perspective

Come With Us Now to the Thrilling Days of Yesteryear

For those of you too young (or too old...) to remember this famous prelude, let me remind you that this was the opening line to every Lone Ranger episode on radio and, later, TV. In its day, The Lone Ranger was big, followed by millions of avid fans who hung on every word, and who couldn't wait until next week, when the next episode came on. Boy, have things changed. Today, the Lone Ranger and his brand of frontier heroics are often seen as a comedic throwback to the 50s and 60s, hopelessly out of date.

I see the changes that have taken place in the plumbing supplies business as at least as dramatic as those in the entertainment world. When I started in the plumbing business (toward the end of the Lone Ranger era), business was conducted entirely differently than today. For instance, way back yesteryear, manufacturer's reps or factory salespeople called on distributors. Period. If a rep wanted to pay a visit to a contractor or engineer, he was supposed to arrange that visit with the local distributor, who would go along on the call. It was an unspoken rule: manufacturers did not infringe on the sales turf of distributors, and distributors had salespeople who called on the local contractors and specifiers. Each part of the sales channel controlled his own little fiefdom, and woe be to he who stepped over the boundary.

Today, distributors call on contractors and spend 70-80% of their day convincing these guys that their price is right. Manufacturers and their reps feel no need to contact a distributor before calling on area contractors, even going so far as to offer incentives directly to the contractor, bypassing the distributor altogether. And

today, manufacturers have full responsibility for calling on the engineering market. The reason? Distributors have determined that they just don't have time to call on engineers, and that getting products approved for use in area jobs is really the manufacturers' responsibility, not the wholesalers'. I wonder if many distributors aren't losing touch with some important parts of their market.

Just how did we get here from there? I'm not sure, other than to say it was slow in coming. And I'm not entirely sure it's a good (or bad) thing. It just is what it is. Instead of being criticized for calling on engineers in a distributor's territory, today we're actually asked by the distributor to make the calls. What was once seen as invading another's domain is now seen as cooperative marketing. Go figure.

So what changes will the future hold? I don't know, but I would like to extend an invitation for distributors to come with us now to the thrilling days of yesteryear. Come with us on some engineer calls. Help us educate our market on the advantages of cast iron DWV and, more specifically, AB&I cast iron DWV. Maybe you could introduce our new product engineering specialist, Gregg Carr, to some of the engineers in your area. In any case, two heads are almost always better than one. Hi-oh-Silver, away!!

I suppose I should have started this column with a special greeting for the holidays. Trouble is, I'm not entirely sure what I'm supposed to say anymore. If I say Merry Christmas, am I insulting my Jewish and Muslim friends? If I say Happy

Holidays, am I just being politically correct in an overly-sensitive attempt to not hurt anyone's feelings? It's like you just can't win. Well, having been born and raised in the Christian faith, I think I'll just stick with Merry Christmas, since that's what the holidays are to me. I mean no offense to anybody, just good tidings during a time of year special to me and mine. If you want to wish me a Happy Kwanza or Happy Hanukkah, I'll take that in the good spirit in which it was intended. I for one am tired of political correctness. Just wish me well, for whatever reason, and I'll thank you for it, and I hope you take my well wishes in the same fashion.

It's been decades since I started decrying the over-commercialization of Christmas. Since when did the value of Christ's birthday get linked up with sales at WalMart and BestBuy? I know, it's nice to express one's affection for loved ones with a gift, but from where I sit, things have gotten way out of hand. It's really to the point now that Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday, not Christmas. Thanksgiving just seems to be more a day of friends, family, food and frivolity (not to mention, football). There just seems to be less stress associated with Thanksgiving, and there's something more settling about a holiday centered around a dinner table than around a gift-laden tree. Maybe it's just me. It does bug me, though, that some school districts are teaching the origins of Thanksgiving without referring to the religious roots of the day. Another sign of the times.

Anyway, Merry Christmas, friends, and a very Happy New Year.



Engineers Question Expanded Use of Plastic DWV

Fire danger cited as primary objection

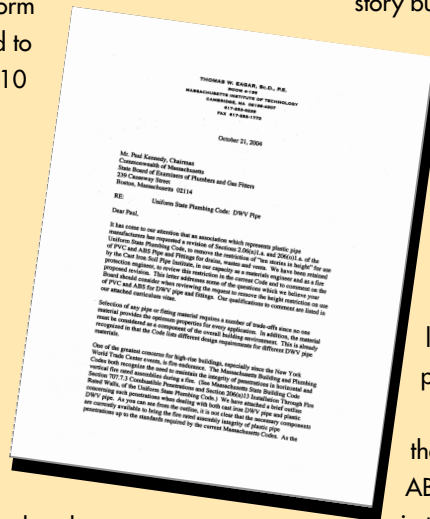
Two leading plumbing engineers have responded to a move by a plastic pipe association to have the Uniform State Plumbing Code in Massachusetts revised to allow the use of plastic in construction above 10 stories. In response to the Cast Iron Soil Pipe Institute's request for an engineering opinion, Thomas Eagar, P.E. and Thomas Klem, P.E. drafted letters to the Board of Examiners of Plumbers and Gas Fitters in which they expressed concern over the proposed change to the Code. Bottom line opinion of these engineers: plastic presents fire dangers not associated with cast iron, and expanding plastic's use to include taller buildings is a bad idea.

Eagar's report reminds us of what everybody already knows: when plastic burns, it emits noxious gases that can kill. "If the ...Code is to expand or even maintain (emphasis ours) the current height restriction on plastic pipe, the sections dealing with the design of horizontal and vertical fire rated assembly penetrations should be strengthened and enforced. There are

many people who believe that the use of plastic DWV in 10 story buildings is unsafe."

Emission of toxic gases isn't the only problem engineers have with plastic DWV. The other large issue is the void space created when the plastic pipe burns or melts. This space then becomes a route for fire to spread into adjacent rooms or floors. "It is our understanding," writes engineer Klem, "that there is a significant level of noncompliance with regard to plastic pipe fire stop penetrations."

AB&I concurs with these notable engineers that the expansion in the permissible uses of ABS and PVC pipe is not in the public interest, in that such expansion would expose larger populations to dangerous gases and faster spread in the event of a structure fire. We are on record as opposing the use of plastic in multi-family structures, period, and certainly don't encourage code bodies and others to further weaken already too-weak limitations on this dangerous material.



Fourth Major Importer Closes Doors

Another importer of cast iron pipe & fittings has bitten the dust, announcing its closure and leaving customers wondering who will stand behind their installed product in the event of a problem down the road. This closure is the fourth such action in the past few months, calling into question the viability of DWV importers and raising concerns about product liability.

"We hate to see anybody go out of business," said Greg Seiler, AB&I sales manager, "but in the case of these importers, I think the public is better protected without them."

Many of these imported products are manufactured in China by companies who don't know (or care about) the differences between casting pipe and fittings and making any other iron product. "To them, this pipe is just a commodity, and quality is not even a concern," says Seiler.

New Price Sheets Now Available

The price sheets, effective January 2005, have now been sent to everybody on our mailing list, and are also available on our website at www.abifoundry.com, in printable .pdf format.

New price lists have been published for the entire AB&I product line, including no-hub pipe & fittings, hub & spigot pipe & fittings, and no-hub couplings and accessories.

If you have not yet received your copy of the printed price lists, contact your field sales representative or the AB&I customer service department at 800/GOT-IRON.

The Christmas season is a time of gatherings and good cheer. Please don't drink and drive; we want to see you all again next year!!

--The AB&I Team

Safety Tips for The New Year

Each year, various police agencies publish safety advice in an attempt to keep us safer from criminals. Since the new year is coming up, we thought it was good time to pass along a recent advisory we received here at AB&I.

1. If a robber asks for your purse or wallet, **DO NOT HAND IT TO HIM**. Instead, toss it away from you. Chances are he's more interested in your wallet and your purse than in you, so will go for the wallet or purse. When he does, run!
2. If you're ever thrown in the trunk of a car, kick the tail lights out and stick your arm out the hole and start waving like crazy. The driver won't see you but everyone else will. This has saved lives.
3. When you get into your car after shopping, don't sit there making notes or entering numbers into your checkbook. Predators could be watching you. As soon as you get in, lock the doors and go.

4. When you get into your car in a parking lot, look around you, know who and what is around your car. Look in the backseat. If you're parked next to a van, enter your car from the opposite side. Many killers have taken people into their vans in parking lots. It's a common technique. Don't be a victim.

5. Always take the elevator instead of the stairs. Stairwells are the perfect place for crime.

6. If the predator has a gun and is not physically restraining you, **ALWAYS RUN!!** Research shows that a shooter hits a running target only 4% of the time.

Cut this out, copy it, and give it to your loved ones. It may be the best advice people get all year.



Just for Fun...

Christmas Quiz

If you don't like dumb puns, skip this quiz. Answers are at the end:

1. On December 24, Adam's wife was known as ____.
2. In Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol, Scrooge was visited by the ghost of ____.
3. An opinion survey in Alaska is called a ____.
4. What does Santa Claus do with his three gardens?
____/____/____
5. What Christmas message is conveyed by these letters?:
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPOQRSTUVWXYZ
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPOQRSTUVWXYZ. ____/____
6. A quiet medieval armor-wearer is a ____.
7. A cat walking on the desert is bound to get ____.
8. Actor O'Connor and actress Channing are known on December 25 as ____.

Meretricious to all! And don't forget that There's No Plate Like Chrome for the Hollandaise.

Answers

1. Christmas Eve
2. Christmas Present
3. North Pole
4. Hoe, hoe, hoe.
5. Noel, Noel (no l, no I)
6. silent knight
7. sandy claw
8. Christmas Carols



Rules for Picking out Men's Xmas Gifts

Buying gifts for men is not nearly as complicated as it is for women. Follow these rules and you should have no problems.

Rule #1:

When in doubt - buy him a cordless drill. It does not matter if he already has one. He may not need it, or know what it does, but it will look good hung on the peg board in the garage.

Rule #2:

If you cannot afford a cordless drill, buy him anything with the word ratchet or socket in it. Men love saying those two words.

Rule #3:

Do not buy a man any of those fancy liqueurs. If you do, it will sit in a cupboard for 23 years. Real men drink whiskey or beer.

Rule #4:

Buy men label makers. Within a couple of weeks there will be labels absolutely everywhere. "Socks. Shorts. Cups. Saucers. Door. Lock. Sink." You get the idea. No one knows why.

Rule #5:

Tickets to a professional sports game (any team within 300 miles) are a smart gift. However, he will not appreciate tickets to "A Retrospective of 19th Century Quilts."

Rule #6:

Men love chainsaws. Never, ever, buy a man a chainsaw.

Rule #7:

Rope. Men love rope. It takes us back to our cowboy origins, or at least The Boy Scouts. Nothing says love like a hundred feet of 3/8" manilla rope.