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Engineering Support Team

## Gregg Carr Takes Cast Iron Message to Engineers, Specifiers



Several years ago, AB&I's management team decided to take affirmative steps to improve the level of communication between the foundry and the engineering/specifying community. The AB&I sales team was reporting back that there was too much misinformation being circulated in the field, and that too many people were making buying decisions based on this misinformation.

"We were hearing all kinds of things from the field," says AB&I's vice president for national sales, Gary Wickham. "People were unclear about product specifications, what was required and what wasn't, and simply did not know if the product they were buying or specifying actually met the requirements."

To counter the flood of bad information in the market, AB&I assembled the Engineering Support Team, a small group of product specialists who spend full time calling on

plumbing engineers and specifiers, bringing them the most current and accurate information about cast iron soil pipe and fittings.

"There is a fair amount of confusion in the market about what products actually meet the specifications for a given job," says Gregg Carr, engineering support specialist for AB&I. It's difficult, if not impossible, for engineers and others to stay abreast of

current requirements, so Gregg travels throughout the AB&I service area, calling on the specifying community, inviting engineers and others to his "lunch and learn" sessions. During these brief sessions, Gregg provides a quick refresher course on current cast iron specifications, the requirements for meeting the necessary standards, and, most importantly, how to tell if a product actually meets these standards.

"There's quite a bit of product out there that does not meet CISPI standards," says Gregg. "It might look OK to the naked eye, but a closer examination could well reveal potential problem areas that could come back and bite you in the backside," says Gregg.

AB&I representatives will even go to a jobsite, inspect the cast iron pipe and

fittings being used, and report back to the customer whether the material meets the standards.

"We've found it's very important to go back and revisit our customers and engineers to keep them updated on what to look for in submittals and on jobsites," said Gregg. "We also teach people how to reject materials that do not meet the standards."

In addition to telling the engineering and specifying community about how AB&I products are manufactured to meet the standards, AB&I also shows them, through regularly scheduled foundry tours at the Oakland plant. These tours demonstrate, in detail, how the state-of-the-art production technology used by AB&I produces the very finest cast iron DWV available, anywhere in the world.

If you're an engineer or specifier and would like to have Gregg pay you a visit, please call 800-GOT-IRON.

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## Perspective



### **The Importance of Industry Standards You Can Count On**

*Is the public really getting what it thinks it's getting in cast iron soil pipe and fittings?*

Standards for consumer and industrial products are nothing new. Governments and industry trade groups have been insisting on standards for products for at least a century, and maybe, in some cases, a lot longer than that. The reasons for these standards range from public safety to uniformity of fit, so that product A will plug into/bolt onto/work well with Product B.

There's an old joke in the plumbing biz that there is no such thing as standardization (just look at all the sizing/threading/materials differences in plumbing products today - but it's getting better). The cast iron soil pipe business is no different from others, in that the government came to us decades ago and asked us to put forth some standards for things like pipe wall thickness so that pipe from different manufacturers would couple together without leaking.

The major pipe manufacturers of the day, including AB&I, sponsored the formation of an industry group called the Cast Iron Soil Pipe Institute (CISPI). This group, formed in 1949, was charged with the development and promulgation of standards for cast iron soil pipe and fittings, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of pipe systems and, thereby, improving public safety as it related to cast iron pipe applications.

Today, CISPI remains very active in promoting new standards, and in ensuring that member manufacturers continue to produce their products in full compliance with these standards. For example, CISPI inspectors visit each member foundry periodically and perform exhaustive inspections of the facilities and production processes. Though AB&I and other foundries are also occasionally inspected by other plumbing trade groups, CISPI inspections remain the most detailed and rigorous in the industry. Only when a foundry's products and methods pass these comprehensive inspections may that foundry use the coveted CISPI mark on its

products. This CISPI mark tells the profession and the public that these products meet the very highest standards in the industry.

Not all cast iron products carry this CISPI mark, often because they don't meet the standards. Often, too, non-compliant producers do not want to change their production methods to meet the strict requirements of CISPI.

For example, a couple of years ago, some loads of scrap iron in Europe turned up with unacceptable levels of dangerous radioactivity. This hot scrap was dumped on unsuspecting foundries, but was, fortunately, discovered before it was used to manufacture any product.

To offset the chance of similarly-contaminated scrap getting into American cast iron products, CISPI promulgated a new standard that calls for all scrap iron being used in member foundries to be tested for radioactivity before reaching the foundry floor. Today, to meet the CISPI standard and carry the CISPI mark, the iron used in products made by compliant foundries must have been tested for radioactivity and found to be safe.

Some overseas foundries doing business in the US find this requirement too onerous and costly to implement. The iron used in the production at these facilities is not tested for radioactivity, does not meet the CISPI standard, and may not carry the CISPI mark.

This is just one example of the many benefits and advantages of verifying that the cast iron DWV products you buy carry the CISPI symbol. It's the one true way to tell that the products meet the highest standards for safety and performance.

If this sounds like a shameless plug for CISPI and its mark, so be it. This fine organization has done more to promote public safety and product standardization than any other trade group, and AB&I is proud to be a charter member.

For more information about CISPI and its work, go to [www.cispi.org](http://www.cispi.org), or call Gary Wickham at 800-GOT-IRON.

I was reminded recently how a single person within an organization can impact a customer's view of an entire company, and not always for the better.

During a trip to Disneyland with my wife, daughter, and grandkids, I had repeated run-ins with a front desk clerk at the five-star hotel we were staying in. Not one clipped, terse conversation, but several. After the first chat, I chalked it up to a bad hair day for this young lady, but as things continued to deteriorate, I was convinced that the root of the problem was training or, to be more specific, the lack thereof.

It got me thinking about our own organization, and how important training is at every level of our foundry. It also got me thinking how training is often minimized or even neglected in many companies, and the affect that can have.

For instance, we deal with buyers sometimes who have not been trained to differentiate price from value. To a few of these folks, the only thing that matters is price, without regard to whether the product meets the standards, or is available in the quantity they need in the time they need. It's not that these are bad people, but they have not been trained to focus on their true objectives and make sure that those objectives can be met.

We spend a lot of time training at AB&I, and have learned over the years that training is a mindset within a company, a continuous process with no end. The more we train, the better we all get at what we do.

Now, lest you think that my Disneyland trip was a bust, let me put your mind at ease. The manager we finally spoke with set everything right, apologized for our inconvenience, comped our whole clan a nice meal, and changed the tone completely. The best thing, though, did not come from the manager, but rather a housekeeper who took extra time to arrange my granddaughter's stuffed animals on the bed at night, even leaving her a special gift when we checked out. This nice lady made all the difference.

Maybe she should be running the hotel?

## A Good Idea....Pass It On

# 'ICE' Could Be the Hottest Idea This Year

It's a simple idea – so simple, in fact, it's amazing that nobody at Homeland Security or the Red Cross had thought of it sooner. Yet it could do more for the peace of mind of family and loved ones in the event of an emergency than perhaps any other single idea.

"It" is the idea of ICE.

ICE stands for "In Case of Emergency."

Here's how it works.

Cell phones are carried by a majority of the population, and almost all of them are programmed with commonly-used phone numbers. Close friends, co-workers, family members, business associates; all are often programmed into the cell phone for easy and fast dialing.

The problem is, if you were incapacitated in an accident or as a result of a sudden illness, who would the people around you call? How would they know that "Mary" in your cellphone is your wife? They wouldn't. And that's where ICE comes in.

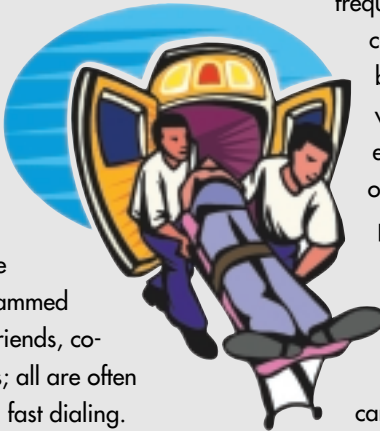
If everybody in the world programmed one, two, or three phone numbers into their cell phones and labeled them ICE1, ICE2, ICE3, then all that paramedics or others would have to do to notify your family of an emergency is call those

programmed numbers.

The idea for ICE was thought up by a paramedic who frequently found himself in the position of having to call someone to alert them about a loved one, but not knowing whom to call. He thought it would be a good idea to develop national (or even international) awareness of ICE as a "next of kin" notifying number. Emergency or hospital personnel would then have no trouble contacting family.

The idea is spreading. Following a disaster in London, the local ambulance service started a city-wide promotional campaign to get residents to program their cell phones with one or more ICE numbers. American magazines and newspapers have taken up the flag, too, raising the awareness among the public and emergency services of ICE as a contact code.

AB&I encourages *Items* readers to take a moment to program their cellphones with ICE (In Case of Emergency) numbers. More importantly, spread the word to your friends and colleagues. It's an easy, common sense approach to personal safety, and it just might catch on.



## **Don't Miss Us at MCAA in Orlando, Feb 24-March 1!**

If you're planning to attend the upcoming MCAA Show at the Grande Lake in Orlando, be sure to look for AB&I's Gary Wickham and his team.

This is a terrific opportunity to connect with old friends and colleagues, make new ones, and take advantage of the educational sessions scheduled during this 6-day event.

Be sure not to miss the keynote address on Monday, February 26, by General Colin Powell. General Powell will draw on his decades of experience in the military and government to share his ideas on changing world events. It promises to be a great session, so plan to attend.

For more information about the show, including a complete program, go to [www.mcaa.org](http://www.mcaa.org).

## **Castillo Wins January Quiz Contest**

Congratulations to Ray Castillo of Hughes Supply in Sylmar, California for winning our January Quiz.

Not only did Ray know what fender skirts were, but he even knew that the Five Satins did "In the Still of the Night."

He also knew Lumpy's real name was Clarence Ruthorford, and he correctly identified Jesus, Matty, and Felipe as the Alou brothers. He also reminded us that there was a little-known fourth Alou, named Boog, who changed his name to Boog Powell so he wouldn't go through life as Boog Alou.

To those of you who don't know what we're talking about, take comfort in your youth, and know that

you, too, will one day have a head full of ancient trivia.



Something to Think About...**Does This Sound Familiar...?**

A Japanese company and an American company decided to have a canoe race on the Missouri River. Both teams practiced long and hard to reach their peak performance before the race.

On the big day, the Japanese won by a mile.

The Americans, very discouraged and depressed, decided to investigate the reason for the crushing defeat. A management team made up of senior management was formed to investigate and recommend appropriate action.

Their conclusion was the Japanese had 8 people rowing and 1 person steering, while the American team had 8 people steering and 1 person rowing.

Feeling a deeper study was in order, American management hired a consulting company and paid them a large amount of money for a second opinion. They advised, of course, that too many people were steering the boat, while not enough people were rowing.

Not sure of how to utilize that information, but wanting to prevent another loss to the Japanese, the rowing team's management structure was totally reorganized to 4 steering supervisors, 3 area steering superintendents and 1 assistant superintendent steering manager.

They also implemented a new performance system that would give the 1 person rowing the boat greater incentive to work harder. It was called the "Rowing Team Quality First Program", with meetings, dinners and free pens for the rower. There was discussion of getting new paddles, canoes and other equipment, extra vacation days for practices and bonuses.

The next year the Japanese won by two miles.

Humiliated, the American management laid off the rower for poor performance, halted development of a new canoe, sold the paddles, and cancelled all capital investments for new equipment. The money saved was distributed to the Senior Executives as bonuses and the next year's racing team was out-sourced to India.

**Just for Fun...****Quotable Quotes**

"He has all the virtues I dislike and none of the vices I admire."

--Winston Churchill

"Thank you for sending me a copy of your book. I will waste no time reading it."

--Moses Hadas

"I've had a perfectly wonderful evening. But this wasn't it."

--Groucho Marx

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play. Bring a friend....if you have one."

--George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill

"Sorry, can't possibly make the first night, but will attend the second...if there is one."

--Sir Winston's reply

"He loves nature, in spite of what it did to him."

--Forrest Tucker

"His mother should have thrown him away and kept the stork."

--Mae West

"I have never killed a man, but I have read many obituaries with great pleasure."

--Clarence Darrow

**Test Your Super Bowl Knowledge**

Think you're a real fan? Try these quiz questions on for size...

1. Which current NFL division is the home to the most Super Bowl champions?
2. Who is the only player to appear in a Super Bowl with the same team in three different decades?
3. What team has made the most Super Bowl appearances?
4. Who is the only person to play in both a Super Bowl and World Series?
5. What facility hosted the first Super Bowl played indoors?
6. Name the only two teams to appear in more than two consecutive Super Bowl games.
7. Where was Super Bowl I played?
8. What was the first Wild Card team to win the Super Bowl?
9. What team scored the most points while losing a Super Bowl?
10. Who was the first person to win a Super Bowl as a player and a coach?
11. Who is the only player to win Super Bowl rings with three different teams?

Fax your answers to 510/632-8035. First correct entry will win an official AB&I golf shirt. Good luck!!

