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Michigan Bars Cast Iron Importer



The Michigan Construction Code Commission recently ruled that state contractors would be barred from using Chinese-made cast iron pipe and fittings sold by California-based MWI Plumbing Wholesale, Inc. The prohibition against using this material would apply to state construction jobs, including schools.

The ruling was based on MWI's apparent inability to meet basic manufacturing standards.

"The concern shared by the state plumbing board and the Michigan Construction Code Commission is there isn't the ability by MWI to set forth control over the manufacturers of the product that would demonstrate compliance with state code," said Henry Green, executive director of the Bureau of Construction Codes.

Codes and standards for the production of cast iron DWV material require that regular testing be done during production to ensure

that quality benchmarks are being met.

Concerns about MWI's compliance were raised when test data were submitted by the importer that caused many to doubt their authenticity.

"Quite frankly, it's very difficult to manufacture cast iron pipe with the same dimensional characteristics over that period of time," Green said. "We want to assure the products installed in buildings will provide for longevity and secure the safety of the occupants," he said.

Concerns about the pipes came to light in January 2005, when state plumbing inspectors refused to allow Chinese pipes sold by MWI to be installed at Southfield High School, because they did not meet state standards.

Since that time, the Cast Iron Soil Pipe Institute, the industry group charged with

promulgating standards for pipe and fittings sold in America, has been actively involved with this issue.

"We work hard to make sure our products meet the industry standards," said AB&I's Kip Wixson, "and welcome CISPI's efforts to watchdog providers who can't or won't provide material that meet the quality and safety standards we all expect from cast iron DWV."

To ensure that AB&I products meet all standards, unannounced foundry inspections are performed by NSF-certified CISPI personnel several times a year. Raw materials, molten iron, and finished products are tested during these visits, and production methods are intensively reviewed to assure ongoing compliance. These test data are then provided to state agencies, listing bodies, and any other interested party to support AB&I's commitment to product quality and public safety.

In this issue...

- ✓ Kip's Perspective
- ✓ Electronic Newsletter
- ✓ No-Hub Couplings
- ✓ Margarine vs. Butter
- ✓ Just for Fun



Perspective

Hey, who took my POPCORN? And for heaven's sake, why?

Every so often, somebody in the business community does something so stupid, so inexplicable, and so dumb-headed that I have to sit back and ask the question, "What in the hell were they thinking?"

The most recent example of corporate dumbness was the elimination by AT&T of the time-honored tradition of calling POPCORN to see what time it is. We've all done it. It's the handiest thing since pockets on a cowboy's shirt. Only now it doesn't work.

I seem to remember that you could dial (that's a throwback term; we haven't 'dialed' a phone in thirty years...) any number after P-O-P and get the time. It didn't have to be POPCORN, but that was easy to remember and always worked just fine.

The amount of public goodwill that went to the phone company for providing this service was immeasurable. I doubt that Ma Bell got many thank you notes, but the fact that POPCORN was so entrenched in our minds as a constant part of our national culture should have told the geniuses at the top that maybe they shouldn't mess with it. But mess they did.

Can anybody out there tell me what possible good doing away with POPCORN did for anybody? How much did it cost the phone company to provide the service? My guess is about zero. After all, circuits are cheap these days.

If it was a money thing, why didn't the phone company just sell advertising on the phone message when you called in? I can hear it now. The time is eleven fifty three and ten seconds, the perfect time for a Budweiser, the king of beers. OK, beer may not be the best thing to advertise. After all, little Johnny might call in to see how much longer he had to write his term paper. Pitching a cold one to Johnny may not be the best plan (see, even I can have a dumb

idea sometimes), but you get my point.

Or maybe they could charge for the service, like directory assistance. I remember when calling Information was free. No more. Maybe people would get used to paying a dime or two to get the correct time. I wouldn't mind.

Again, what possible benefit could there have been to the phone company in discontinuing POPCORN? It just doesn't make sense.

So what do we do now when we need to set our clocks? Do we call our friends and ask them what time it is? How do we know they're right? What do we use as a standard?

Maybe there's a website out there that tracks an atomic clock someplace and gives us the exact time. We could always turn on the computer, wait for it to start, launch our web browser, Google "time set", search for the appropriate website, link to it, wait for the graphics to load, and get the time. Or I suppose we can look at the screen on our cellphone, if that's handy. Somehow dialing POPCORN was easier and faster.

I miss the twentieth century already.

The lead story in this newsletter is about a California pipe importer who has been banned from selling material to the state of Michigan because of possibly incredible data provided to the state during the product approval process.

Our purpose for bringing this item to your attention was not to beat up on a minor competitor, but rather to point out the difficulty importers have in documenting their products.

Pipe and fittings are supposed to be marked with the manufacturer's name, country of origin, and date of production. This is to enable the public to trace back the source of substandard material in the event of a future problem. Since many Chinese

foundries subcontract to other foundries for their product, inventory that product, then coat and mark that product after an importer places an order, it becomes impossible to tell who actually made this or that piece of pipe and when. Since the date of production cannot be established, it is impossible to check the foundry data to see what the composition of the iron was at that foundry on that date, or if the pipe met dimensional standards on that date. See the problem? The importers often cannot provide good data to those who ask for it, because it is simply not available.

Distributors and contractors are advised to play it safe. Buy only cast iron pipe and fittings that carry the CISPI mark, assuring full standards compliance. Insisting on AB&I would be a good idea, too.

It's budget time again. That time of year when we gaze into our crystal balls to see what the future will bring so that we can plan for it. Yeah, right.

Budgets, like battle plans, survive until the first contact with the "enemy." Energy prices spike. There goes the budget. Storms in South America send scrap prices soaring. There goes the budget. And on and on.

A big part of the budgeting process involves estimating revenue. Will growth continue next year? Will commercial construction slow down? If so, by how much?

We spend a fair amount of money subscribing to economic forecasting services that are supposed to help guide our way. Most of these predict a mild slowdown next year, from 3-17%. It could be better, it could be worse.

From where I sit, I see a good first half of 2008, followed by a mild-to-moderate slowing of commercial activity in the second half. That's what we're planning for. What do you think?

Product Update

Think of AB&I for All Your Couplings Needs!



Whatever your no-hub couplings needs, AB&I is fully committed to being your one-stop source for all major brands and styles.

Whether your requirements call for standard or reducing Anaco couplings, Husky heavy-duty couplings, or SuperGripLD couplings for those 12" and 15" applications, AB&I is sure to have the product you need in the quantity you need, available immediately for fast delivery.

"We are fully committed to being very competitive in the couplings market. Call us for a quote before going anywhere else."

AB&I even carries the full line of specialty and transition couplings for joining pipe and fittings of dissimilar material. Whatever your coupling needs, call on AB&I.

Large inventories of all coupling styles are available from both the Oakland foundry and headquarters and the LA Service Center.

For more information, contact your AB&I representative or call customer service at 800-GOT-IRON.

AB&I Newsletter, ITEMS, Now Available in Electronic Format

In response to recent customer requests, AB&I will be making its monthly newsletter, *ITEMS*, available in convenient .pdf format delivered direct to your email inbox. This electronic version will be *in addition* to the printed copies customers and others have received for over four decades.



To begin receiving the *ITEMS* in electronic format, simply send an email to graphics@spectrix1.com with your request. You'll begin receiving your *ITEMS* via email with the very next edition.

If you don't want the electronic newsletter, but still want to continue receiving your printed version, simply do nothing. Your full color newsletter will continue arriving in your mailbox, just as before.

AB&I Wishes Everybody a Joyous Holiday Season!

November marks the beginning of the holidays. Just like years past, this season holds the promise of reunion with beloved friends and family members, good food and companionship. The entire team at AB&I wishes to extend our heartiest best wishes for a loving and meaningful season. If you travel, please be safe; take an extra moment to think before you act, and please don't drink and drive.

**HAPPY
THANKSGIVING
TO ALL**

And while you're thinking, consider those among us who don't enjoy our same bounty. Maybe you can find a way to share your blessings, helping to brighten their season, too.

And don't forget our wonderful service people in far away lands, making possible all we are thankful for today.

Margarine vs. Butter

Do you know the difference between butter and margarine?
Margarine was invented to fatten turkeys. When it killed the turkeys, the people who put their money into the research wanted a return on their investment, so they had to figure out another use for the product. It was a white substance with no food appeal, so they added yellow coloring and sold it to people to use in place of butter.

Both butter and margarine have the same amount of calories.

Margarine can increase heart disease in women by 53% compared to butter (Harvard University).

Eating butter can increase the absorption of other nutrients.

Margarine is higher in trans-fatty acids, increases bad cholesterol and lowers good cholesterol.

Margarine increases the risk of cancer, decreases immune response, and decreases insulin response.

Margarine is just one molecule away from being plastic. If you

set a tub of margarine out for a couple of days, you'll probably notice the following:

- 1) No flies will go near it.
- 2) It does not rot or smell differently, because it has no nutritional value.
- 3) Nothing will grow in it. Not even tiny microorganisms can sustain life in margarine. Why? Because it's nearly plastic.

Would you melt down your Tupperware and spread it on your kids' toast?



Just for Fun...

Things for Which to be Thankful

Trains, cars, airplanes, horses and buggies that allow us to travel great distances to share Thanksgiving with our loved ones.

The spouse who complains when dinner is not on time, because s/he is home with me, not with someone else.

The teenager who is complaining about doing dishes, because that means she is at home and not on the streets.

The mess to clean after a party because, it means I have been surrounded by friends.

The taxes I pay, because it means that I'm employed.

A lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning and gutters that need fixing, because it means I have a home.

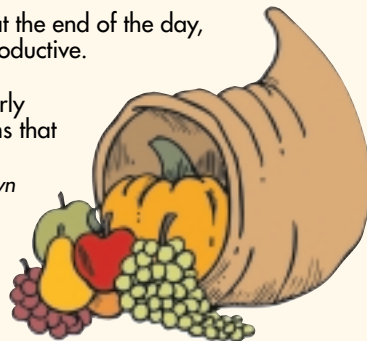
All the complaining I hear about our government, because it means we have freedom of speech.

The space I find at the far end of the parking lot, because it means I am capable of walking.

Weariness and aching muscles at the end of the day, because it means I have been productive.

The alarm that goes off in the early morning hours, because it means that I'm alive.

Author Unknown



Boomer Quiz

1. World leader who pounded his shoe at the United Nations?
2. First name of the Beaver's best friend?
3. Running Bear's Indian maiden?
4. First U. S. astronaut to orbit the earth?
5. 1963 hit song recorded by the Kingsmen?
6. Kept breaking windows around Mayberry?
7. Variety show host who brought the Beatles to American TV?
8. Perry Mason's opponent who NEVER won a case?
9. Stage name for the Rifleman?
10. Miner who stood "six foot six and weighed 245"?

Fill in the blanks...

1. Raised in the woods so he knew every tree / Kilt him (7 words)
2. She wore an itsy bitsy teenie weenie (3 words)
3. Hey kids. What time is it? (4 words)
4. I've got smog in my noggin, ever since (4 words)
5. Reason the Purple People Eater wouldn't harm the songwriter:
"I wouldn't eat you 'cause (3 words)
6. Dobie's best friend was (3 words)
7. Where have all the flowers gone? (5 words)
8. You'll wonder where the yellow went (7 words)
9. You're all invited back next week to this locality (14 words)
10. Good night, Chet (3 words)

To enter the quiz, go to www.abifoundry.com/novquiz.
The first entry with 100% correct will receive an official AB&I golf shirt.

