



# ITEMS

**HAPPY  
NEW YEAR**

January 2011

## *Compliance Made Simple* **Entire AB&I Cast Iron System Now NSF® Certified!**

With the recent NSF® Certification of Anaco no-hub couplings, AB&I's entire cast iron system has been third-party certified to meet the rigorous CISPI 310 and 301 standards. Now, ensuring that cast iron DWV and couplings are unquestionably compliant is simple: Look for the blue NSF logo on couplings and the NSF Logo on cast iron pipe and fittings. It is as simple as that.

By insisting on third-party certification by NSF International, the world's most respected inspection and certification organization serving the plumbing supplies industry, you are assured that you have the very best cast iron system available.

"We're pleased to enable engineers, inspectors, contractors and owners to easily identify that the cast iron system installed in their building meets the standards and will perform as expected over the long term," said AB&I Senior Sales Manager, Gary Wickham, "All you have to do is look for the NSF logo on your iron and couplings."



***"We're pleased to enable engineers, inspectors, contractors and owners to easily identify that the cast iron system installed in their building meets the standards and will perform as expected over the long term..."***

NSF International has certified that all AB&I cast iron pipe and fittings are in full compliance with CISPI standards, ensuring the market and the public that AB&I products meet the standards for iron composition, dimensional integrity and uniformity, wall thickness, resistance to deflection, and many other critical factors that contribute to product quality and longevity.

In the case of couplings, NSF Certification verifies that the metal components are comprised of genuine 300-series stainless steel, and that the gaskets employ neoprene as the primary elastomer. Many substandard couplings use less costly, inferior steel that may corrode in a short time, and rubber-composition gaskets that may deteriorate when exposed to the effluents normally found in DWV applications.

Protect your specification and your installation: Insist on NSF Cast Iron and Couplings.



### **AB&I in 2011: Excellent and Improving**

**Commentary** by Michael Lowe

Although it is too early to discuss all of the lessons learned from the Great Recession (as I don't believe we are out of the woods yet) one clear lesson has been that providing "total value" to customers is far more important to long-term success than only having the lowest price. At AB&I, we define our Total Value as the overall benefit of doing business with AB&I, beyond price.

Competing on price alone is a short-term strategy, easily replicated and made inconsequential. However, we believe that providing superior Total Value to one's customer will separate a company from the pack and will lead to long term business partnerships.

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Customer Service Update

# In Customer Service, It's the Personal Touch That Counts

The following was taken from Ezinearticles.com, written by Kristina Evey

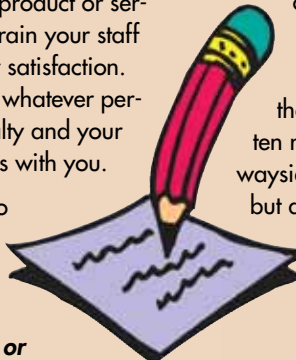
In order to increase customer satisfaction, it's important to remember this - customers are not buying your product or service. They are buying a relationship with you. Train your staff toward excellent customer service and customer satisfaction. Enhancing the customer relationship by adding whatever personal touches results in increased customer loyalty and your customers will go out of their way to do business with you.

**Use your customers' names.** Everyone likes to be recognized, and the use of the customer's name without having to be reminded shows effort and interest on your part.

**Learn how your customer uses your product or service.** By finding out how your customer uses your product or service, you can tailor it to their needs. You will also be viewed as an invaluable resource by suggesting other products or services that will enhance their purchase.

**Discover their preferences.** When you discover the preferences of your customer and incorporate them into the process, your customer will feel valued. Whether it be day of the week for deliveries, straw or no straw in the drink at your restaurant, the type of folder they prefer their reports bound in, just paying attention to their preferences displays that you value their business and go out of your way to have things just as they prefer them.

As an example, an exclusive hotel chain puts out a questionnaire to all of their new hires asking for their food, beverage and snack preferences. When they show up for their first day of training, the stated preferences are ready and waiting for each individual. This sends the message that if the hotel is so concerned about the preferences of their staff, then they will be equally, if not more, concerned about the preferences of their guests.



**Touch base and follow up on individual requests.** By accommodating individual requests, customers realize that you will go out of your way to meet their needs. This displays the value you are placing on them and their business.

**Follow up and say Thank You.** A personal note of thanks speaks volumes. Sending a personal handwritten note is a tried and true favorite that has fallen by the wayside with new technology. Email is better than nothing, but a professional thank you card with a short handwritten note gives that personal touch.

*“Customers are not buying your product or service. They are buying a relationship with you.”*

To give an example that ties in all of these points - I do most of my professional clothing shopping at a particular national chain which has a retail outlet in our local mall. Any time I walk in, the manager comes over to me and asks about me and my business. She asks if I have any big presentations coming up, and if she can help me get a new outfit. She pulls out the card with my sizes and color preferences and says that she will start getting some outfits together for me while I browse. She checks in with me while I try them on and gives helpful suggestion on accessories. She leaves the clothes on hangers automatically for me because she knows I like to just take the clothes out of the garment holder and just hang them up. And the next day comes the finishing touch - - a handwritten Thank You note written on the company stationary. Even though I may get better prices at the anchor store in the mall, I go back to the place that pays personal attention to me every time.

## The AB&I Customer Service Team



Dori Keenan  
Oakland  
Customer Service Mgr  
800-GOT-IRON

dori.keenan@abifoundry.com



Lisa Douzos  
Oakland  
Customer Service  
800-GOT-IRON

lisa.douzos@abifoundry.com



Jannine Longoria  
LA Service Center  
Customer Service  
800-356-IRON

jannine.longoria@abifoundry.com



Geoff Izuno  
LA Service Center  
Customer Service  
800-356-IRON

geoff.izuno@abifoundry.com

## Iron Pipe vs. Plastic: The Real Story

ABS plastic pipe materials came into existence as a lower-cost alternative to cast iron several decades ago. But is the cost benefit alone enough to warrant using plastic instead of iron in most applications? Compare for yourself below:

| Property                             | AB&I Cast Iron | ABS Plastic |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Most Resistant to Crush              | ✓              |             |
| Requires Minimal Trenching           | ✓              |             |
| Emits Dangerous Fumes When Burned    |                | ✓           |
| Requires Additional Firestopping     |                | ✓           |
| Will Last the Life of the Building   | ✓              | ?           |
| Most Resistant to Chemical Breakdown | ✓              |             |
| Most Resistant to Sound              | ✓              |             |

The simple truth is that cast iron soil pipe and fittings are the better choice, oftentimes even in residential applications where plastic is most often used.

Iron pipe that was installed in the 1600s in Europe is still being used today, providing the same service it did a century before the American Revolution. Iron will outlast plastic.

Building codes require that installations involving plastic pipe also include special firestopping at penetrations. This is because plastic melts when burned, providing the fire a free route to spread to neighboring spaces. Iron does not melt under normal fire temperatures, so does not require the extra labor and cost required by firestopping. Also, plastic emits poisonous fumes when burned, subjecting occupants and firefighters to additional dangers not present with cast iron.

Chemical effluents passing through plastic pipe can react with the plastic, causing deterioration of the material over a relatively short time, potentially resulting in system failure. Iron resists such deterioration.

By code, correctly installed plastic pipe requires labor-intensive trenching and preparation. Iron does not. Additionally, many residents of two-story homes and apartments object to the sound of water swooshing through walls from upstairs toilets and showers. Iron pipe is much quieter, reducing or eliminating this annoying sound.

Iron is the better choice for most applications, commercial or residential. For more information, call Gary Wickham at 800-GOT-IRON (468-4766).

### Geoff Izuno Joins Customer Service Team



Help us welcome the newest member of the Customer Service team at the LA Service Center. Geoff Izuno comes to us with extensive experience in plumbing supplies distribution, having worked for a Southland wholesaler. Though fairly new to AB&I, Geoff will be taking on major responsibilities

by filling in for Jannine Longoria while she's out on maternity leave. Be sure to say hi to Geoff the next time you call into the Service Center.

### The AB&I Team Wishes You and Yours a Very Happy and Prosperous New Year



With the New Year comes another heartfelt Thank You and Best Wishes from our team to



yours. We hope you found time to spend the holidays with family and good friends, and that the New Year brings you fresh beginnings, good health and prosperity.

Commentary by Michael Lowe

**Excellent and Improving...**

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It appears to me that the survivors of the Great Recession are companies that have historically provided better total value than those that have succumbed. Great brands in other industries, like Nordstrom's, Southwest and Apple, differentiate themselves by providing business experiences that are meaningful and advantageous to their customers, beyond price. By no means does AB&I consider itself to be a nationally-recognized "great brand" yet, but we do endeavor to be one in the future.

We will do this by improving our very good Total Value to great Total Value. Providing this value to you involves producing reliable, high-quality pipe and fittings; includes prompt, courteous service and follow-up; includes providing actionable market information; and includes genuinely caring about your needs and success.

Although some may consider several of these areas to be our strengths, AB&I is committed to improvement in all of them. In 2011 you can expect AB&I to strive to provide you with an improved business experience and greater Total Value. As Kevin McCullough, Vice President of AB&I's Custom Casting Division, often says: AB&I is "excellent & improving, again."

To help us provide you with improved total value, I would appreciate your feedback. Please let us know how we can we do better for you. Call me at 510-502-4805 to share your thoughts, or email me at michael.lowe@abifoundry.com.

Thank you for your support, and have a very Happy and Prosperous New Year.



**The Monthly Chuckle...**

**New Year's Resolutions You Can Actually Keep**

- Gain weight. At least 30 pounds.
- Stop exercising. Waste of time.
- Read less. Makes you think.
- Watch more TV. I've been missing some good stuff.
- Procrastinate more. Starting tomorrow.
- Don't date any of the Baywatch cast.
- Spend more time at work, surfing with the T1.



- Take a vacation to someplace important: like, to see the largest ball of twine.
- Don't jump off a cliff just because everyone else did.

- Stop bringing lunch from home: I should eat out more.
- Don't have eight children at once.
- Get in a whole NEW rut!
- Start being superstitious.
- Personal goal: bring back disco.
- Don't wrestle with Jesse Ventura.

**Will Durst's Predictions for 2011**

- Sarah Palin tapes a second season of her reality show and accidentally shoots a Mama Grizzly from a helicopter.
- The women on "The View" walk out during an appearance by Keith Olbermann, just to balance the books.
- Lady Gaga wears a tinfoil dress to an NBA playoff game and spontaneously combusts during the pre-game laser show.
- Gov. Jerry Brown promises to focus less on the vast spaceship that is Earth and more on the long-term parking shuttle that is California.
- Julian Assange demonstrates his total commitment to a "no secrets" philosophy by leaking the damning testimony that leads to his own conviction.
- Officials at the Tour de France throw up their arms and invite cyclists to take whatever performance enhancing drugs they want.
- New York Sen. Chuck Schumer becomes the go-to guy in the Democratic Caucus after it is discovered Harry Reid died years ago.



**Quick Sales Contacts...**

Michael Lowe, VP Sales and Mktg  
WA, OR, AK, W. ID, NY City, NJ, NC, SC, GA, FL, AL  
510.502.4805  
michael.lowe@abifoundry.com

Gary Wickham, Senior Sales Mgr  
HI, CO, UT, AZ, MT, WY, ID, NM, TX, OK, LA, MS  
510.501.5756  
gary.wickham@abifoundry.com

Bill Woehlke, Regional Sales Mgr  
CA-N, WI, MN, NE, IA, MO, KS, AR, ND, SD  
414.731.5234  
bill.woehlke@abifoundry.com

Ron Izuno, Regional Sales Mgr  
CA, NV  
805.990.5538  
ron.izuno@abifoundry.com

Ash-Lee Rud, Regional Sales Mgr  
Northern California  
650.703.9338  
ash-lee.rud@abifoundry.com

Brian Lee, Regional Sales Mgr  
OH, KY, TN, MI, IL, IN, WV, E. MO, W. PA, NY, VT, NH,  
MA, RI, CN, DE, MD, VA,  
614.371.1730  
brian.lee@abifoundry.com

