

Overcoming Obstacles

The challenge of selling product amidst standards changes

During the course of a year, this industry sees many changes in standards and regulations. Some of them create quite a challenge for water treatment dealers, but still there are others that offer great opportunity to the dealer who knows how to use them correctly.

One hurdle that dealers are facing is with the national "Do Not Call" list that was approved in July and had more than 10 million phone numbers registered in the first four days, reported the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The FTC also said that it expects up to 60 million phone numbers to be registered in the first year and there are only 166 million residential phone numbers in the United States.¹ Dealers that rely on cold calls now must seek alternative methods for producing leads. (See article on page 8.) Direct mail and local advertising in newspapers, the Yellow Pages and shopping directories may serve as viable alternatives.



Softeners also took a hit this year mainly in California, although brine issues arose nationwide. Assemblywoman Jackie Goldberg reintroduced AB334 in California, which will repeal portions of SB1006, making it possible for a community to ban equipment whether the community is in violation of federal regulations or not. If these bans become common, dealers will have to find a way to work with them. "Softener bans in California are meant to reduce salt in effluent streams," reports

Joseph Harrison, technical director for the Water Quality Association (WQA). "Obviously, we wouldn't advise dealers to sell around the ban. However, there are ways a dealer can work with it by economically pumping brine out of the home to ensure that it does not go into the wastewater. Then, it can be disposed of in an ecologically sound manner."

Brine, septic tank and plumbing code issues were at the forefront of activity for the POU/POE industry this past year, says Harrison. "These will continue to be challenging for the industry, so technological advances as well as creative solutions such as brine dewatering and brine removal via pump trucks will need to occur to ensure a strong business future."

Amidst the troubles caused by the many softener restrictions, other legislation changes have emerged as opportunity for dealers. Case in point: The arsenic standard serves as an excellent opportunity for water treatment dealers to sell product, not only to residential customers whose city water may not meet the new standard, but to those municipalities that are willing to utilize POU/POE technologies as a viable solution.

In 2001, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) maximum contaminant level (MCL) for arsenic was lowered from 50 parts per billion (ppb) to 10 ppb. This placed a heavy burden on the approximately 4,100 public water systems that would

What can I do to monitor regulations in my area?

1. **Know who your local government agencies are** and get a general knowledge for how they work.
2. **Know who your government officials are** and whom to contact at each agency regarding water issues.
3. **Subscribe to agency mailing lists** and monitor these lists, newsletters, articles, etc., that pertain to your business.
4. When new legislation / regulation arises, **notify your regional association** as well as the Water Quality Association.
5. **Remain active and be an expert** in the industry, local government and the media.



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face financial obstacles. The EPA estimated that national costs could reach \$177 million per year—most of which is attributed to the installation and operation of the treatment technologies needed to reduce arsenic levels in public water systems.²

As the public becomes more aware of high arsenic levels in their drinking water and the compliance deadline of January 23, 2006, nears, there will be a greater demand placed on POU/POE treatment devices as a solution to lower the levels, which small to medium public water systems cannot afford to do.

Many consumers, particularly those in areas with high arsenic, will not want to wait for that compliance deadline—

especially those utilizing small public water systems that may file extensions due to costs. This will leave the consumer open to higher arsenic levels for a longer period of time. “Household treatment technologies commonly available today can not only reach the 10 ppb MCL but take it even lower,” Harrison states. “When customers understand that the EPA maximum contaminant level goals often are 0, they may opt to ensure their family has the safest water possible today.”

Here are some ideas on how dealers can leverage new standards such as the arsenic MCL and create an opportunity to make the sale.

- **Educate the customer.** Explain and show with visual aides (i.e., EPA website, photos at www.wqpmag.com, graphs, etc.) what arsenic (or another contaminant) is and its affects, what an MCL is and why it was lowered, why the customer should be concerned in his area (newspaper clippings) and how you can offer him a viable solution.

Educate your customers about NSF-, UL- or WQA Gold Seal-certified products to help them understand the importance of products that have met the industry standards for reducing or eliminating the contaminant(s) in their specific household water. “All savvy consumers look for some mark of certification when making a purchasing decision,” Harrison explains. “Smart salespeople can leverage sales of products by explaining that, for instance, WQA awards its ANSI-accredited Gold Seal only to systems, components or additives that have met or exceed industry standards for contaminant reduction, structural integrity and material safety.”

- **Test his water** while you are in the home. Show him that he has reason to be concerned about the arsenic levels.
- **Understand the current technologies** available and make sure you select the one that is right for that customer. Sell

Bottled Water Industry Opposes AB83

Bill Reduces Consumer Protection

Assemblywoman Ellen Corbett’s AB83 will force Californians to lose the protection of stringent state laws, which regulate bottled water as a packaged food product. AB83 would remove bottled water from the regulatory authority of the California Food and Drug Branch and have it become regulated—at the state level—as a public water utility, reported the International Bottled Water Association (IBWA).

“Today, state law requires the Food and Drug Branch to review each public drinking water standard and each bottled water standard to ensure that they are at least as stringent and protective of public health,” said Stephen R. Kay, vice president of communications for IBWA. “The same holds true for FDA, which must undertake the same measures with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at the national level. There is no logical public health or public policy basis that would require such a drastic and expensive change in bottled water regulation.”

him the most efficient system for his individual needs, not the one that will get you the highest price.

Obviously, brine issues, the arsenic standard and the “do not call” list are three of the many changes that can cause you grief or bring opportunity. “More of these same kinds of regulatory issues will continue to arise,” Harrison concludes. “As water tables drop, concentrations of contaminants increase. Water supplies are dwindling nationwide and will continue to do so. Therefore, we will see more regulations to ensure that fewer contaminants are introduced into the water supply. This will mean business opportunities for better water treatment products.”

Learning to work with these government changes and use them to your advantage in your sales presentations will only bring more sales and success to your business. **WQP**

References

- 1 CBSNews.com. “Do-Not-Call Still a Big Hit,” July 1, 2003.
- 2 Severn Trent Services.

Must-See Sites

Enviro Health Action
www.envirohealthaction.org/water

Food and Drug Administration
www.fda.gov

International Bottled Water Association
www.bottledwater.org

National Institutes of Health
www.nih.gov

NSF International
www.nsf.org

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Ground Water
www.epa.gov/safewater

U.S. Geological Survey
Water Resources Division
water.usgs.gov

Water Quality Association
www.wqa.org

Water Quality Products
Arsenic Zone
www.wqpmag.com

*See page 14 for further association listings.