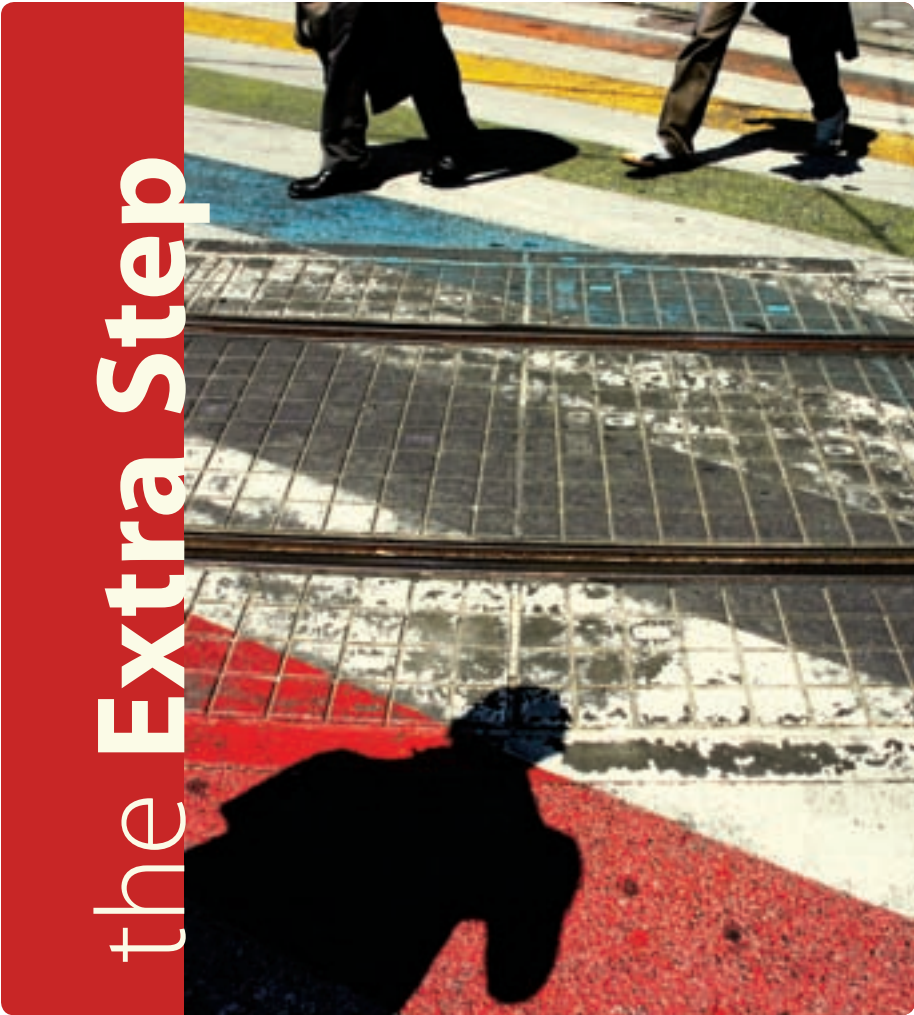




the Extra Step

By Pauli Undesser

Understanding the importance of third-party certification

This extra step instills confidence in the consumer that any certified performance claims are substantiated by test data from a third-party source. The important factor regarding certified products is what impact the certification has on consumer decisions to purchase certified products and how consumer knowledge regarding certification plays a role in this impact.

Certification of filtration devices has a large impact on an educated consumer finalizing a decision on a purchase. Educated consumers are inclined to research and determine exactly what contaminants are causing their water to have substandard quality. By doing this, they will become familiar with the specific performance claims they require in a filtration device to achieve quality water.

Some of these consumers may even go as far as researching the manufacturers of devices that have specific performance claims in order to determine the most reputable manufacturer. Other consumers may choose the manufacturer based on competitive pricing as long as all products being compared maintain a certification from a reputable certification agency. Overall, the educated consumer will conduct an extensive search for products that have certified performance claims meeting their needs.

The most significant impact on the purchase of certified filtration products is typically recognized in slightly educated consumers, who represent the largest group. Slightly educated consumers have

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Many filtration device manufacturers produce reliable products to protect the general public from lead, cysts, mercury and the many other contaminants that may be present in drinking water. A good percentage of manufacturers provide consumers with an extra level of assurance by taking another step to subject their products to third-party certification, which includes rigorous laboratory testing according to industry standards.

enough knowledge about water filtration to know that if their water has an odd taste, it needs to be treated to remove that taste.

It should be noted that when it comes to slightly educated consumers, aesthetic contaminants have priority over health-related contaminants. This is true because the aesthetic contaminants tend to cause the foul-tasting or adverse-looking water. Because the presence of health-related contaminants typically does not provide the telltale signs of contaminated water, the slightly educated consumer likely will not focus on the reduction of these contaminants.

Fortunately, slightly educated consumers will tend to seek the guidance of a dealer or make purchases based on familiarity with large manufacturer names. Dealers—particularly those that are part of a certified company—will provide consumers with additional education regarding the need to evaluate household water to ensure that if there are health-related contaminants in the water, a proper system will be used to reduce both obvious aesthetic contaminants and the health-related ones.

The dealer recommendations will lean toward certified products because consumers tend to favor third-party evaluations. Fortunately, for slightly educated consumers, the most familiar manufacturers tend to obtain product certification. Further, all certification agencies maintain websites that are updated daily with the most current lists of product certifications and the reduction claims associated with the certifications.

While not significant, some impact will be imposed on uneducated consumers. Unfortunately, the benefit for

the uneducated consumers exists only because they will tend to buy products based on a large, familiar manufacturer name. Because most large manufacturers will have the performance claims certified by a third-party certification agency, there is a good chance that the product will maintain some sort of certification. However, the reality is that the uneducated consumer will be easily swayed to purchase filtration devices based on low price regardless of the manufacturer reputation or certification.

Overall, it is clear that third-party certification of filtration devices has a huge impact on consumer purchases. In the age of technology and consumer awareness regarding health issues, it is a safe assumption that most consumers have some education when it comes to purchasing water treatment equipment. The impact is brought about in various ways, such as manufacturer reputation, dealer recommendation or consumer education, but the end result is the same—certified products are leading the filtration market. *wqp*

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