

Searching for the Right Water Treatment Device



Web-based
research techniques
for your customers

By Sarah Zrout

As a water dealer in this expanding and ever-changing industry, you know that consumers today literally have thousands of drinking water treatment devices to choose from to bring into their homes. The process of choosing one usually involves more than simply picking one out based on appearance or the price alone.

Aesthetics, do play a part in the consumer's final decision—most people want matching appliances—but they may not understand what all the long contaminant names, numbers and seals or marks on the packaging mean. So how does the average consumer know which type of water treatment equipment is best for their home? This is where a third-party certifier's website may come in handy for the customer to do some research before meeting with a dealer.

As a water professional, your first step in helping a customer choose the right type of water treatment equipment for their home is to diagnose the water to see if there are any contaminants, substances or unwanted tastes or odors present that would require treatment in the form of a point-of-use or point-of-entry water treatment device. Once the consumer is armed with this knowledge, their search for the right type of drinking water treatment device can begin.

The Search Process

Websites function as a powerful search tool to help a consumer find all the facts needed to make an informative, correct decision—all from the comfort of their own home. As a water treatment professional, inform your customers of the research options available to find certified equipment. These include:

Manufacturer brand or model. Many manufacturers and their brands are well known. Consumers have

the option of plugging in a brand name of a company they saw on an advertisement or heard from word of mouth. The brand name will then appear, divided by standards that have products certified under them.

Product type. There are more than 30 types of treatment products to choose from on the Water Quality Association's (WQA) website. This can be a great starting point if someone knows they may want a device to treat all the water in their home, such as a whole-house filter or softener, or see all the different options they have for their kitchen, such as faucet mounts, pour-through pitchers or reverse osmosis machines. Once a product type is chosen, one can view the entire list of products that are certified. This makes the search process easy by narrowing the options that are available.

Claim, contaminant or substance. Perhaps the most important search option is to look for a water treatment product that is made to reduce the specific contaminant or substance a homeowner would like removed from their water. These contaminants and substances are known as "claims," meaning the particular device certified to reduce one of these unwanted characteristics can list this in their product literature as a claim.

For example, after you inform your customer of the results of their water composition, they might discover their water has too much iron in it. Wanting this substance to be reduced to a level

where it will not cause any problems, the customer can search for a treatment device that can reduce iron. Once a claim is selected, the search will lead to NSF/ANSI, WQA or other standards that the claim falls under.

Once the standard is selected, a list will show up divided by manufacturer, product type, product name and all of the claims for which the product is certified. Once a product is selected, the next step for the consumer would be to look up the manufacturer's website for any additional information about the product.

Product standard. The most technical and perhaps least understood option for the casual searcher is to search by product standard. Generally, standards are classified by type of drinking water treatment device, technique or claim. For example, NSF/ANSI Standard 44 and WQA S-100 cover water softeners. This means the procedures, acceptance parameters, literature requirements and other details pertaining to water softeners all are covered under this standard. If a product can meet or exceed the parameters set forth in this standard, it can then be certified under the standard for the particular claims for which the product has passed the requirements. If a person selects a certain standard to search on the website, all of the certified products that fall under this standard will appear. Products can also have multiple certifications under different standards.

If your customer is looking for additional information regarding product listings and the meaning of claims and standards, inform them that these can be found by contacting associations such as the WQA. *wqp*

Sarah Zrout, CWS-I, is quality manager for the WQA. Zrout can be reached at 630.929.2541 or by e-mail at szrout@wqa.org.

LearnMore! For more information related to this article, visit the web at www.wqmag.com/lm.cfm/wq040807

For more information on this subject, write in 1017 on the reader service card.