

Barbara Higgins



Get the Lead Out!

In an effort to ensure that America has the cleanest water possible, on Jan. 4, 2014, a new law reducing the amount of lead allowed in plumbing products will go into effect. Williette Nyanue, assistant editor for *Water Quality Products*, recently spoke to Barbara Higgins, executive director of Plumbing Manufacturers Intl. (PMI), to discuss the implications of the law and how manufacturers are preparing to comply.

Williette Nyanue: What implications does the new lead law have?

Barbara Higgins: The bottom line is that after the deadline, products that do not comply with the 0.25% lead standard cannot be sold.

The law, originally passed in California, is a good move to ensure that America has the safest water in the world. This law will harmonize the standards from state-to-state with the 0.25% maximum lead requirement.

In addition to the law that talks about the content of the products, there is a performance standard, NSF 61—a test that looks at the quality of the water coming out of the faucet. Both are a kind of belt-and-suspenders approach to clean water, in which not only are we looking at the content of the water, we are also now looking at the content of the faucet itself.

Nyanue: What is PMI doing to ensure that the association and its partners are ready for the new law?

Higgins: We have been preparing since the bill was passed in 2011. We have used this time to get the word out to all of our companies and manufacturers to ensure that they were informed about the legislation and would have time to purge their inventories.

For those manufacturers and distributors that are not prepared, we are involved in getting out training that will ensure

compliance. That is the motivation behind the “Get the Lead Out of Plumbing Consortium”—to make sure that everyone knows that they have got to get rid of this stuff before the January 2014 deadline. We have looked at a calendar of different industry events and are using these events as a platform to provide companies with the training and education that they will need to ensure compliance.

We held a press conference here at PMI headquarters, located in Rolling Meadows, Ill., on Nov. 9, during which we rolled out the parameters of the trainings that we will have in conjunction with various tradeshow and trade events throughout the coming year. Each of the constituents, contractors, suppliers and distributors will have its own outlet for training.

Nyanue: What is the most challenging part of the implementation of this law?

Higgins: The communication aspect of the law will probably be the biggest challenge. Like with any other communication challenge, with the flood of information that people have aimed at them everyday, it is hard to get the word out. I think communicating the law to ensure compliance is probably the biggest challenge, and that is what we’re tackling with the consortium.

Nyanue: What impact will this legislation have in the future?

Higgins: I think that this legislation will serve as an example to other countries. For example, Canada is looking at implementing the same rule. It is concerned that the materials that are no longer under compliance in the U.S. may end up in Canada. Though the law has not yet been passed in Canada, it is looking to push the legislation through to get a 2014 deadline.

I don’t think that manufacturers are often given credit for being proactive and looking for new materials and so forth. In this case, we did, and I am hoping that it raises the visibility and the credibility of manufacturers.

The overall impact of this law will probably take a long time to be seen. It is going to take a while to get the word out and get the compliance, and then to get credit as manufacturers. *wqp*

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