



Plastic Pipe and Fittings Association

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SPECIAL NOTICE TO RETAILERS **3rd Party Certification for Plastic Plumbing Pipe**

It has come to our attention that some retail outlets may be selling plastic plumbing pipe products that are not certified for standards compliance by an independent third-party organization. In this case certification means that the products have been tested against the applicable product or health effects standards and carry the mark of the certification agency. Most plumbing codes and plumbing inspectors either require or strongly suggest third party certification. Knowingly selling non-code complying products can aid and abet the violation of plumbing codes, which have the force of law.

BACKGROUND

Plumbing products and their installation relate directly to public health and safety. This is why state and local governments heavily regulate such products. It is widely understood that both the design and selection of materials for plumbing systems must be done according to the requirements of state and local plumbing codes and other applicable regulations.

Most state and local codes are based on model plumbing codes. These days there are essentially two such model codes: The International Plumbing Code (IPC) published by the International Codes Council (ICC) and The Uniform Plumbing Code (UPC) published by the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO).

These two model codes, as well as virtually all state and local codes, either have specific guidance for third party certification of plastic plumbing piping (and other products as well) or delegate authority to the regulatory official (inspector) to establish proof-of-compliance requirements. In most communities regulatory officials require that plastic piping products be certified by an independent third party to demonstrate compliance. PPFA supports such requirements.

WHY THIRD PARTY CERTIFICATION

- 1.) Except in a few cases, code compliance requirements control the *installation* of plumbing products, not necessarily the *sale* of plumbing products. While it is improper and even dangerous, many plumbing jobs (especially repair or remodeling) are done without the benefit of a building permit. In the case of plastic piping products this means products not meeting the plumbing code requirements (including third party certification) end up being installed. *Local and state enforcement officials must be able to rely on all sources of supply to aid compliance by providing products that meet code requirements.*
- 2.) *Quality assurance:* To become certified by an independent third party certification organization, a plastic plumbing pipe manufacturer must maintain quality assurance practices. This means that a seller has independent verification that the products will be free from defects and will meet the most stringent requirements of end users. Selling quality products means fewer problems and fewer returns for the seller.
- 3.) *Accountability:* If there are problems a seller must deal with, third party certification makes it relatively simple to find out what went wrong and who caused the problem. Such accountability saves a lot of finger pointing and time, when a problem occurs.

4.) *Confidence*: A seller needs assurance that he is receiving and selling products in which he has confidence. The mark of an independent certification organization on the product can enhance both the ease of purchasing a product for the seller and provide assurance to the ultimate user of the product. The ultimate user may know little about local regulatory requirements. If he or she is sold products complying with local regulations, there's a lot less potential for improperly using and installing products that may ultimately cause problems.

NECESSARY PRODUCT MARKING

With plastic piping products used for non-pressure (drainage) applications there are two markings the buyer should look for: The first is the designation of the standard to which the product is manufactured, such as, ASTM D2665-1999. The second is for ANSI/NSF Standard 14 coupled with the mark of the third party certification organization.

For plastic piping products used for pressure (potable water) applications there will also be two marks on the products. The first, as with the drainage products, will be the product standard designation, such as ASTM D2239-1999. The second set of marks will attest to the fact that the product meets the requirements of ANSI/NSF Standard 61 and has been independently evaluated and certified to this standard.

RELEVANCE OF THE STANDARDS

Most plastic piping *product standards* are promulgated by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). These standards establish the minimum physical requirements for the product.

ANSI/NSF Standard 61 is a *health-effects based standard* and is applicable to all potable water piping products, not just plastic. Demonstrated compliance with this standard assures the user that the product is not leaching harmful amounts of chemicals into drinking water.

ANSI/NSF Standard 14 sets the requirements necessary to carry out independent third party certification, including quality assurance auditing for each manufacturing location.

SUMMARY

The plastic plumbing pipe industry has long supported the use of independent third party certification of industry products. PPFA continues to support this concept because it gives the user and seller confidence that the products will meet the requirements of his or her job and will be code-compliant. PPFA urges retailers to follow the requirements of local or state regulations in stocking and selling plastic plumbing piping products. PPFA further urges retailers, for all the reasons expressed above, to seriously consider specifying third party certification of plastic plumbing piping products in their purchasing specifications.

ABOUT PPFA

The Plastic Pipe and Fittings Association is a voluntary, non-profit organization of 80 United States and Canadian companies primarily engaged in the manufacture of plastic pipe and fittings for plumbing and piping applications typically installed on the building premises. PPFA functions as a clearinghouse for information, a sounding board for its members, and a coordinating and decision-making body for dealing with industry issues. For additional information about PPFA or the 2001 Spring Meeting, contact the Association at 800 Roosevelt Road, Building C, Suite 20, Glen Ellyn, Ill. 60137; 630/858-6540; fax 630/790-3095; or visit the website at www.ppfahome.org.