

CORROSION-RESISTANT POLYETHYLENE PIPE COULD BE LONG-TERM SOLUTION TO D.C.'S WATER WOES

President of Plastics Pipe Institute: New pipe can be installed with minimal disruption

The long-term solution to an age-old problem calls for the consideration of modern-day pipe materials. According to articles in The Washington Post in April, lead service lines have carried water under the city's soil for more than 100 years. But with residents outraged about high lead levels, some city officials also said it is finally time for the aging pipes to go.

The D.C. Water and Sewer Authority's Board of Directors have been considering a proposal to spend at least \$350 million to replace the estimated 23,000 lead lines by 2010. "We recognize this as a major expense and major dislocation," said WASA Board Chairman Glenn S. Gerstell in an April 5 article in The Washington Post, "but we may need to do it and get it over with so we can be free of this lead problem."

Rich Gottwald, president of the Plastics Pipe Institute, urges water officials and political leaders in Washington DC to consider polyethylene pipe as a long-term solution to the District's ongoing concerns with the safety of the drinking water and the health of the citizens. "The two issues that consistently come up are corrosion and tearing up our neighborhoods to install new pipe. Polyethylene pipe can solve both problems," said Gottwald.

PPI responded to this issue by putting together background information on polyethylene pipe and hand-delivering the packets to local Washington DC water officials and politicians. PPI will continue to actively monitor the situation and push for code changes that would allow polyethylene pipe to be used for drinking water applications in DC. One resident of Washington quoted in the April 5 newspaper story said, "it's time we do a long-term plan and get rid of these lead service lines just to reduce the risk of this ever happening again," she said of lead contamination reports. "We're overdue to have people start asking our water officials and elected leaders why polyethylene pipe is not being considered as a permanent, long-term solution," Gottwald said. "The biggest reason we hear for using pipe materials other than polyethylene for drinking water is that 'it's the way we've always done it,' " Gottwald added. "There's a reason new technology has supplanted items such as 8-track tapes and manual typewriters. It's time we looked at using modern materials to eliminate ancient issues."