

October 23, 2008

A Statement on Fused Thermoplastic Pipe

On July 17, 2008, the Plastics Pipe Institute (PPI) conducted a web-based seminar (webinar) expressing our concern regarding issues relating to a new method of joining polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe using heat fusion. The webinar emphasized that the fusion of thermoplastic pipe is a critical process that demands an open and full analysis by contractors, utilities, engineers and pipe manufacturers alike.

Several important points were raised during the webinar: Firstly, not all plastics are the same. Because many consumers do not necessarily make a distinction among various plastic pipe materials, a failure of one piping material may be attributed to all plastic pipe.

Secondly, the long history of successful heat fusion of HDPE pipe cannot be extended to each and every plastic material. PPI recommends that all aspects of plastic pipelines, including heat fused joints, be subjected to rigorous testing, including long term stress testing, to ensure that the material and its fusion process can withstand the stresses imparted to the material during the installation and service of the pipe.

Finally, we emphasized that nationally recognized, consensus standards be adopted for pipelines used in municipal water applications, and that such standards consider not only the material aspects of the pipe, but also of the fused joint. In the absence of such standards, PPI recommends a cautious approach when evaluating new plastic materials and joining methods.

Our webinar explored in fair detail the differences between HDPE and PVC pipe. Because our emphasis in the webinar was on the successful history of fused HDPE pipelines, we have been characterized of being a trade association for HDPE pipe, yet the mission of the PPI “is to promote plastics as the material of choice for piping applications.”

While many of our member companies have high density polyethylene (HDPE) interests, our organization also includes a number of producers of other plastic materials including polyvinylchloride (PVC), chlorinated polyvinylchloride (CPVC), polyamide, polypropylene, and crosslinked polyethylene. In addition, a growing number of our members also have divisions that produce and/or distribute ductile iron, cast iron, steel, copper, clay, corrugated steel, and concrete pipe.

The primary objective of PPI is to provide a forum for our member companies to work in a cooperative effort to broaden the market for plastic pipe and related products. Over 50 years of collaboration with nationally recognized organizations have created worldwide recognized standards and guidelines so that today, our members’ products serve virtually every underground utility and application where pipe is used.

To view our webinar “A Closer Look: HDPE and Fused PVC Pipelines” go to www.plasticpipe.org.