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## ENGINEERING *Firm of the Year*

Metro Design Associates, Inc.



## In Defense of Domestic CISP

An associate of mine brought the "Point/Counterpoint" article on cast iron soil pipe in the August 2002 issue to my attention. He felt because of my background and outspoken history within the codes and standards processes that I would be pleased there were others that still embraced what I considered to be common sense. But since I have left the enforcement sector of the codes and standards process, my only mandate in this arena is to ensure that my firm buys quality material, installs a quality product and exists as a quality mechanical service company. As predicted, I empathized with Mr. Christiansen's views and easily recognized the attempts of a manufacturer/seller of a product in question to discredit the messenger.

The initial statement by Mr. Christiansen, was merely a report of the findings of the U.S. International Trade Commission. I was, however, pleased with the additional point made by Mr. Christiansen, which is similar to my current mandate. Buy quality materials if you want to install a quality product. Otherwise, your company may incur overwhelming and unnecessary liabilities, and the legal costs associated with them. I personally do not believe there is an inspector or contractor around that is unaware of the controversies surrounding deficiencies that exist in many plumbing products today. Culpability exists. The mass acceptance of inferior products and product standards in no way removes our liability.

I do not recall any instance where Mr. Christiansen addressed or attacked any particular company, but simply stated that we should be aware as buyers and installers of materials within the marketplace.

Ms. Bowe seemed more frustrated with the North American manufactur-

ers of cast iron, and in particular, with the Cast Iron Soil Pipe Institute, than with trying to address the point expressed by Mr. Christiansen (*Ed. Note: Please see also the Oct. 2002 Letters column for more from Paula Bowe on this subject*). It is my understanding that Richmond Foundry, Inc. is not a foundry at all, but merely the distributor of pipe manufactured at various locations overseas. They in turn mislead the consumer by having their U.S. d.b.a. painted on the pipe, regardless of the point of manufacture. I would be frustrated also if I continually had to defend questionable issues surrounding a product, when the extent of control my company had over the product was from the shipyard to the supply house.

The counterpoint reminds me of an old saying, "The guilty dog always barks first." I respect Ms. Bowe's dedication to her company and her necessity to support its position on the use of foreign materials. But her lengthy response and use of statistics obviously compiled by U.S. agencies, lacks the appropriate countering information one would think would be available from a reputable foreign agency, especially from a country that can produce materials compliant to the standards we have embraced. If a

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## Write Us!

PME welcomes your views on any industry issue.

We reserve the right to edit letters for length, grammar, clarity and libel.

We will grant anonymity if requested, but will not publish any letter whose author is unidentified to us.

Send letters to: Kelly Johnson, PM Engineer, 1050 Rte. 83, Suite 200, Bensenville, IL 60106-1096 fax: 630-694-4001 or e-mail: [johnsk@bnp.com](mailto:johnsk@bnp.com).

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## Publishing and Editorial Staff

Publisher **Scott Reimer**  
630-694-4007 • [SR@bnp.com](mailto:SR@bnp.com)

Editorial Director **Julius Ballanco, P.E.**  
630-616-0200 • [jballanco@bnp.com](mailto:jballanco@bnp.com)

Consulting Editor **Jim Olaszynski**  
630-694-4006 • [jed@bnp.com](mailto:jed@bnp.com)

Managing Editor **Kelly Johnson**  
630-694-4379 • [kjohnson@bnp.com](mailto:kjohnson@bnp.com)

Contributing Editors:  
**Dan Holohan, Mark Bromann,  
John Scaffield**

Art Director **Scott Hilling**  
248-244-1276 • [hilling@bnp.com](mailto:hilling@bnp.com)

Production Manager **Lisa Rahimpour**  
248-244-6432 • [lrahimpour@bnp.com](mailto:lrahimpour@bnp.com)

Editorial & Advertising Office: 1050 Rte. 83, Suite 200  
Bensenville, IL 60106-1096  
phone: 630-616-0200

## Advertising and Sales Staff

### NORTHEAST

Group Publisher **George Zebrowski**  
P.O. Box 157, Windsor, MA 01270  
413-684-1447, fax: 413-684-1448  
[GZebrowski@aol.com](mailto:GZebrowski@aol.com)

### MIDWEST & SOUTHEAST

**John Schwei**  
1050 Rte. 83, Suite 200, Bensenville, IL 60106-1096  
630-694-4000, fax: 630-694-4001  
[jschwei@aol.com](mailto:jschwei@aol.com) [jschwei@bnp.com](mailto:jschwei@bnp.com)

### CENTRAL, MID-ATLANTIC & EASTERN CANADA

**Scott Reimer**  
1050 Rte. 83, Suite 200, Bensenville, IL 60106-1096  
630-694-4007, fax: 630-694-4001  
[SR@bnp.com](mailto:SR@bnp.com) [reimer@bnp.com](mailto:reimer@bnp.com)

### WEST & WESTERN CANADA

**Ben Smith**  
1050 Rte. 83, Suite 200, Bensenville, IL 60106-1096  
630-694-4007, fax: 630-694-4001  
[ben@bnp.com](mailto:ben@bnp.com) [smith@bnp.com](mailto:smith@bnp.com)

### REGIONAL SALES MANAGER- OHIO/WEST VIRGINIA/KENTUCKY

**Scott Franz**  
251 W. Central Ave. PWS #270, Springfield, OH 45506  
937-748-9975, fax: 937-748-9820  
[FranzS@bnp.com](mailto:FranzS@bnp.com)

### CLASSIFIEDS & REPRINTS

**Faith Lake**  
1050 Rte. 83, Suite 200, Bensenville, IL 60106-1096  
630-694-4380, fax: 630-694-4001  
[lakel@bnp.com](mailto:lakel@bnp.com)

### JAPAN

**Aco Media Service Akio Ishii**  
Phone: 3 (3661) 3335, Fax: 3 (3661) 3336  
[amsakio@cc.mbn.or.jp](mailto:amsakio@cc.mbn.or.jp)

## Circulation Staff

For subscription information/questions, call 847-291-5224  
or fax 847-291-4816 or email at [PME@bnp.com](mailto:PME@bnp.com)

Corporate Circulation Director  
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List Rental Manager **Karen Brohl**  
800.837.7370 ext. 2 Fax: 248.244.6429  
[kbrohl@bnp.com](mailto:kbrohl@bnp.com)

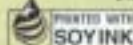
Project Manager **Andrea Burns**  
248-244-6490

## Corporate Staff

Publishing Director - Plumbing Group  
**Tim Fauch**  
[fauch@bnp.com](mailto:fauch@bnp.com)

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Corporate Office: 755 West Big Beaver Rd., Suite 1000,  
Troy, MI 48068  
248-362-3700, fax: 248-362-0317



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## News Briefs *cont.*

The memberships of BOCA, ICBO and SBCCI recently voted to dissolve their individual organizations and combine into the International Codes Council effective January 1, 2003. All memberships in these organizations will be transferred to ICC on that same date.

Symmons Industries has unveiled its redesigned, user-friendly Web site, [www.symmons.com](http://www.symmons.com). The new site provides complete product information, specifications and installation instructions, catalogs, where-to-go-to-buy information, job postings, a complete site map and an archive of news releases.

Weil-McLain has announced the sale of the assets of its Canadian operation to a newly-formed company, Weil-McLain Canada Sales Inc. The new company, owned by partners Bill Palamar and John Goshulak, assumed all previous responsibilities including national sales, distribution and service of Weil-McLain products on August 1. The company will continue to operate out of the existing facilities on Finley Road in Brampton.

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## Appointments

**Skip Henderson** has been promoted to director of sales administration for TOTO, overseeing customer service, fulfillment and claims activities. He had been TOTO's director of sales for the Western region.

Uponor Wirso has named **Dale Stroud** director of marketing. Stroud most recently served as vice president of marketing for Able Manufacturing and Assembly.

Burnham Corp. has promoted **Mike DiPaolo** to general manager of Burnham Industrial. In addition, he will manage the manufacturing operation of Thermal Solutions, a second commercial boiler company and subsidiary of Burnham. DiPaolo had been operations manager for Burnham Residential products.

Noveon has named **Christopher Boyher** marketing consultant for the manufactured housing and recreational vehicle industry for TempRite PEX products. He worked as a Noveon FlowGuard Gold CPVC field consultant from 1994-1999.

## PME Letters *Continued from page 4*

supplier is being forthright about its product, this information should be provided to me and other consumers to make an educated decision regarding a foreign-supplied product.

At one time, inspectors and installers could rely on information provided during the listing process, to ensure that products installed were compliant with applicable codes and standards. Since that time, the listing of plumbing products has become a multimillion-dollar industry in the United States. The development and maintenance of the codes and standards utilized in these processes have become quite aggressive, competitive and cutthroat, to say the least. Most of those of us who have participated in these processes in good faith have only asked that we be allowed to "compare apples with apples."

Unfortunately, in today's marketplace, most listing agencies avoid ensuring a product's compliance with a standard. They now only provide evaluations based on the test reports submitted by the manufacturer or seller of the product. The problem with these watered down processes is that an unscrupulous manufacturer or seller of a product can shop around until they get the test report they are looking for. When deficiencies in the product are brought to light, most agencies will not reverse their listing of the product for fear of litigation with the manufacturer/seller and the potential loss of their revenue.

Forget the general public that we are charged with protecting. It is easier to attack the individuals that have identified the deficiencies of various products. Scrutiny of the manufacturing process of a product should be welcomed if you are going to participate in this arena. A return to the development and maintenance of prescriptive standards is a necessity in this era of watered down "performance-based standards." Compliance with a true prescriptive standard for a product should be the goal of everyone within this industry. Consumers have that expectation, but are being misled. Without prescriptive language in our codes and standards and individuals to question

their application, consumers may one day wake to find out that a soda can and a book of matches is now considered a water heater and that a garden hose is a water distribution system. Or worst yet, a piece of pliable material on top of a drainage stack is a proper vent for a drainage system. Excuse me—that last one has already happened.

I believe the Cast Iron Soil Pipe Institute was unfairly attacked in the counterpoint. They have worked to not only develop comprehensive standards for these products, but to ensure compliance from all that compete in the cast iron soil pipe and fitting industry. This mind set is a rarity in this industry today. If we are truly comparing apples with apples in regard to these products and the processes required to produce these products, then the manufacturing requirements and burdens should be the same whether the product is domestically or foreign produced. From all appearances, this has not occurred, making the U.S. International Trade Commission correct in its assessment of non-malleable cast iron fittings being sold at less than fair market value.

If Mr. Christiansen is completely off track, as Ms. Bowe would have you believe, the U.S. Mint should consider having all our coins produced overseas. This may seem like a ridiculous concept, but no one questions the scrutiny placed upon the production of a penny. As important as this simple process is to our way of life, coins still do not protect the health and safety of our nation. But our plumbing systems do. There is nothing wrong with questioning the integrity of the products we utilize or the codes and standards that govern their application, and maintaining high expectations for all. It is just common sense. **PME**

**Russell Wyman**  
DiversaTech Mechanical, Inc.  
Ferris, TX