



Taking a Close Look at Challenges Will Reveal Solutions

By Kerry Stackpole, FASAE, CAE, PMI CEO/Executive Director



Kerry Stackpole

How often do you have doubts and questions about your choices? The mysteries of yesterday sometimes fade, but not always. It was **Albert Einstein** who pointed out that our task is to “learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.”

The abundance of questions in today’s universe is seemingly endless. The race for greater understanding of climate change and the causes and remedies of drought in the western United States are among the critical questions that come to mind. The National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln reports 84% of the western region is currently in drought, with about 47% in extreme or exceptional drought conditions. More than 58 million people in the states of Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Arizona, Idaho, Montana and New Mexico find themselves experiencing significantly lower-than-expected water levels in rivers, lakes and reservoirs.

One of the likely impacts is an increased fire risk for those living in these drought-stricken areas. Fire damages in California alone in recent years have exceeded \$10 billion. The damage to water and sewer infrastructure, coupled with the complete devastation to homes and the loss of life from the fires, magnifies the need for action. Climate change experts at Stanford University have been studying the fires in hopes of identifying ways to reduce the fuels that feed the flames. Controlled burns and removal of ground vegetation are two ideas likely to help lower the fire risks. The problem is the high costs of managing these efforts. Some say it could be \$1,000 per acre.

The recent reporting on plumbing shortcomings in almost 500,000 dwellings across the U.S. continues to illuminate the disparity and dangers of inadequate plumbing systems. Plumbing is considered inadequate if it lacks one or more of the following: piped hot and cold water, a bathtub or shower, or a toilet. A kitchen is considered inadequate if it lacks a refrigerator,

a stove or range, or a sink with a faucet. The COVID-19 pandemic brought much-needed attention to the risks of inadequate plumbing for those stuck at home during pandemic lockdowns and susceptible to contracting the virus.

Plumbing Manufacturers International members have stepped in to help meet the challenge of creating safe and hygienic sanitation practices, alongside commitments to help people conserve water, energy and other natural resources. The private-public partnership of the Environmental Protection Agency’s WaterSense program, launched with only 300 fixtures in 2006, now exceeds 30,000 products designed specifically to use less water and consume less energy in everyday use. In PMI’s update to the U.S. WaterSense Market Penetration Study in 2019, WaterSense-certified tank-type toilets have a 16.8% market penetration, bathroom sink faucets have a 40.1% market share, and showerheads 45.4%. This growth reflects significant progress; however, continued growth will yield abundant reductions in water usage in those regions hard hit by drought.

Levi Strauss & Co. has conducted a study to assess the entire lifecycle impact of a pair of its jeans. The study uncovered that the greatest water and energy impact was in two areas: cotton cultivation and consumer care. The company’s research led to more than 1 billion liters of water saved through the Levi’s Water<Less process. The company also took steps

Continued on page 8

INSIDE

PMI Webinar: Workplace DE&I	2
Bradley Corp. Organizes Vaccinations	3
Alliances, Tech and Trust	4
Plumbing System Modeling	5
Advanced Recycling of Plastic Waste	6

PMI Webinar, Staff Training Support Workplace DE&I

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Plumbing Manufacturers International continues to step up its efforts to support diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) because they're essential to the future success of PMI and the plumbing manufacturing industry. Many of PMI's members are realizing the fundamental value of a strong commitment to DE&I, too, as they compete for talent, consumer preference, and market share.

PMI staff members have invested a significant amount of time learning best practices for creating robust DE&I programs in the workplace. PMI staff members recently earned DE&I certificates from the University of South Florida Muma College of Business. They learned essential practices and collected new tools to help them better understand employee diversity and how businesses can embrace equity and inclusion.

Their course work covered topics such as stereotypes and biases, how to analyze your organization's progress, shifting from awareness to action, and how to build a lasting diversity, equity and inclusion model for your organization.

To serve as a resource to PMI members on DE&I initiatives, PMI will host a DE&I workshop from 1-2:30 p.m. CT, July 20. The workshop will be facilitated by the Center for Automotive Diversity, Inclusion & Advancement (CADIA), an organization PMI chose after a diligent search and reference check. Having rich experience working on DE&I programs with automotive manufacturers, CADIA is working to develop a workshop customized for the needs of PMI members.

The importance of DE&I in the workplace was spotlighted in the 2021 PMI Annual Report, which features

an interview with **Katrina Jackson**, UL's global head of diversity and inclusion. Read the interview and the full annual report on PMI's website (safeplumbing.org/communications/pmi-annual-report-2021).



Juneteenth Can Help Companies Feature DE&I Plans

As social justice and race issues persist, the need for education, awareness and change relating to DE&I has never been greater. Juneteenth, a holiday observing the end of slavery in the United States, gives businesses an opportunity to either continue – or start – a discussion about DE&I plans.

The holiday commemorates June 19, 1865, when Union troops occupied Texas and freed the remaining slaves who had been denied freedom. First celebrated in Texas in 1979, Juneteenth has grown in importance for African American communities, according to a UCLA Newsroom article. Since then, 46 more states have recognized Juneteenth as a state holiday.

Original celebrations included prayer meetings and singing spirituals; these celebrations have evolved over the years to also include religious services, speeches, educational events, family gatherings and picnics, and music festivals. In 2021, many cities across the nation are celebrating Juneteenth with festivals and events. For example, Pittsburgh will host a "Freedom Day" Fest, Jubilee Parade and Juneteenth Educational Series, reported visitpittsburgh.com.

Bradley Corp. Organizes Vaccinations at Workplace

By Ray Valek, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Eager to make COVID-19 vaccinations as easy as possible for its Wisconsin employees, Bradley Corp. worked closely with Froedtert Health in a vaccination effort that included providing shots at the workplace.

Diane Rudy, Bradley's vice president of human resources, said the Plumbing Manufacturers International member company referred about 210 employees once they became eligible for vaccinations to Froedtert clinic locations. Early on, after vaccinations first started, the company enabled employees to get vaccinated off-site during the workday if they heard of extra doses being available. Once eligibility for vaccination began to expand, "Froedtert offered to do a pilot program to come on-site, which we did take full advantage of," she said.

Bradley posted a sign-up list offering 50 doses to their workers in Menomonee Falls and Germantown. "We started there because those are the people that can't work from home. We felt it was important that we gave them the option first," Rudy recalls. Froedtert staff provided vaccinations on a Friday for two hours in Menomonee Falls, where most of the employees who signed up were located, with Germantown employees who signed up making the short drive



over. "We had appointments every five minutes for a couple of people at each time slot, and it went really smoothly. Within two hours, we had 54 people vaccinated," she said. "It made a big difference for a lot of people."

Bradley had been partnering with Froedtert and the Medical College of Wisconsin for the company's occupational medical needs. "They seemed a natural partner, but the minute the vaccine was released, we called every place we could think of to get on a list, from the local health department to the state of Wisconsin to the local pharmacy in town, along with Froedtert," Rudy stated. "And we knew that the first one that was going to make an offer to us, we were going to take up, and we were happy it was Froedtert because we have a good long-term relationship with them."

Rudy estimates that at least 50% of the company's Menomonee Falls and Germantown employees were vaccinated through Bradley's referrals or on-site vaccinations, although she said it's hard to know for sure because some employees may have received the vaccines elsewhere. Bradley hopes to have at least 75% of its workforce vaccinated soon and is providing educational materials about the merits of the vaccine to employees to encourage them.

The vaccination effort builds upon the workplace safety effort Bradley made during 2020 and continues during 2021, the company's 100th anniversary year. "We were able to isolate and quarantine appropriately" to protect workers, Rudy said. Designated an essential workplace, "we stayed open. Many employees were very grateful for that, but they were also very worried, right? Maintaining social distancing, wearing masks, hand washing and constantly communicating and being vigilant all definitely helped."

As far as next steps, "we are keeping a really close watch," Rudy explained. "Throughout this entire pandemic, we've been watching our community. Are infections going down? If we see numbers starting to go up, and we see infections happening more frequently in our plant, I think we are going to have to take more stringent actions, like making sure employees know who is vaccinated versus those who are not, because many people who have been vaccinated wish everyone would get on with it and do it."

Rudy added that an individual's personal choice to not be vaccinated must be respected. "We don't want to force it," she emphasized. "We hope we get enough employees in here that are vaccinated that it won't become a problem. We want people to get educated and make the right choices."

How Is Your Company Encouraging Vaccination?

With vaccines now open to all adults and supplies plentiful in many areas, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourages employers to facilitate COVID-19 vaccinations on site at the workplace. The vaccines can be provided through existing occupational health clinics, employer-run temporary vaccination clinics, or mobile vaccination clinics operated by a local health care provider, the CDC says. A CDC webpage about workplace vaccination programs ([tinyurl.com/ydpt7zas](https://www.cdc.gov/workplace/working-safely/working-safely-101/working-safely-101-101.html)) provides detailed information about how to provide vaccines to your workers.



Alliances, Tech and Trust Key to Systems Resiliency

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Continued challenges with plumbing system pathogens, low public trust in water quality, and natural disasters and catastrophic events, such as the pandemic, have presented the need to design more resilient plumbing systems.

Assuring sustainability, quality and safety while re-thinking plumbing system designs will require a comprehensive approach focused on building strong industry partnerships, concluded a panel of experts at the 2021 Emerging Water Technology Symposium (EWTS) in May. Other crucial elements include using technology to automate and improve plumbing systems, applying innovative sustainability measures, and enhancing communications with the public.

“We need holistic solutions to account for multiple systems and situations,” said **Christoph Lohr**, vice president of strategic initiatives at IAPMO and a member of the panel that discussed “Designing More Resilient Plumbing Systems” at EWTS. Lohr noted that everyone in the industry is working hard to come up with solutions. “However, we need to look at the consequences of those solutions – especially when decisions are made in silos,” he added.

Los Angeles: a case study in using innovative sustainability tools

As more states face challenges with drought and water scarcity, a push for water re-use and other conservation methods is taking place. Introducing those methods into existing plumbing systems and water infrastructure needs

to be carefully considered, Lohr noted.

Jonathan Leung, assistant director of the Water Quality Division at the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, offered his perspective as a public water supplier on drought and water conservation. “How we’re going to address future water shortages on the West Coast is definitely one of the themes that has come up,” he said. However, capturing and using grey water in building systems and applying advanced treatments to recycled water for potable re-use impacts the source water quality.

Public water suppliers often have been forced to defend the quality of water they’re providing, Leung noted. Instead of pointing fingers, water suppliers, installers, manufacturers, governments and others in the industry need to come together to ensure that safe, high quality water flows from the tap, he said.

He shared several examples of how his organization has been working to use innovative sustainability tools and seek partnerships for water conservation. One example involves using 96 million shade balls to reduce evaporative losses in water reservoirs. He highlighted another example of his department working with the UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation Premise Plumbing Working Group to address issues on water quality and affordability, as well as plumbing codes and legal frameworks.



Automation, plumbing technology part of the equation

Incorporating system automation and plumbing technology is another part of the equation. **Edwin Gonzalez**, piping specialist with GF Piping Systems, discussed the many benefits automation provides, such as system control to track water temperature, flow and usage.

These dynamic systems, which are ASHRAE 188 compliant, can change with environmental conditions, like with the pandemic. “You can shut down part of a system or an entire system and do that from a control panel onsite or remotely,” he said. “Water automation systems also analyze data and can make adjustments to the system using that data.” Monitoring water age and preventing stagnation – to reduce the possibility of pathogen growth – can be accomplished, too, Gonzalez added.

Unfortunately, he noted that few buildings use monitoring capabilities. He reported that his company is educating building owners and engineers about those capabilities and hopes to expand monitoring into healthcare facilities and schools.

Gonzalez acknowledged the important work plumbing manufacturers are accomplishing in developing plumbing technology, such as digital mixing valves, advanced sensor faucets,

Continued on page 8



Christoph Lohr



Jonathan Leung



Edwin Gonzalez

Plumbing System Modeling Can Help Deliver Critical Data

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

It's time for the plumbing industry to step up its efforts to collect and share critical data needed to design better-performing premise plumbing systems. One way the industry can deliver that critical data?



Andrew Persily



Grace Jang



Regan Murray



Steve Buchberger

Embrace existing technology to model plumbing system performance.

A panel of industry experts took a deep dive into this topic and more during a session titled, “Premise Plumbing Research and Implementation – What’s Next?” during the 2021 Emerging Water Technology Symposium (EWTS) in May.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) made strong progress to identify 59 of the industry’s research needs when it released the 2020 NIST Technical Note 2088: Measurement Science Research Needs for Premise Plumbing Systems, said **Andrew Persily**, chief of the Energy and Environment Division at NIST, and the panel moderator. Since the report was published, the premise plumbing landscape has evolved – especially with plumbing system issues like water stagnation caused by the COVID-19 shutdown, Persily said.

Data can be hard to get

“Premise plumbing issues are complex. This complexity of the issues means you need better science and data, which are the best ways to inform the risk assessment and impact to improve plumbing system performance,” said panelist Dr. **Grace Jang**, research program manager at the Water Research Foundation. However, researchers face challenges in both mining and sharing the right data.

Persily discussed plumbing standards, which often can take years to develop. In

the meantime, building operators, engineers and installers are using incomplete knowledge when making changes to building plumbing systems, he said.

Persily asked: How do we connect research teams around the world so they’re not “ships passing in the night?” The Environmental Protection Agency is connecting with others by having many of its researchers sit on industry standards committees, said panelist **Regan Murray**, director of the EPA’s Water Infrastructure Division. Committee and task force participation are great ways to bring scientific expertise to the table as decisions on standards are being made, she added. “For our research to be effective, we need to be partnering with the right organizations as early in the process as possible,” Murray said.

System simulations offer more dynamic picture

Plumbing system modeling can help provide important data needed to design better performing systems.

Looking to the future, panelist **Steve Buchberger**, professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of Cincinnati, noted that in the next 30 years the world population will grow from 7 billion to 10 billion people. That growth will prompt new high-rise construction with efficient, safe premise plumbing systems.

Buchberger described building information modeling (BIM) technology,

used by architects and designers, as a tremendous opportunity to develop three-dimensional models of premise plumbing systems before they’re built. He explained that a system simulation wouldn’t provide only a single answer – it would provide a range of possibilities and, perhaps, give a realistic idea of what that range of possibilities are. “This could be useful because we might look at that result and say, well, that’s not acceptable. That resident time for water coming out of the tap is far too long, so maybe we need to modify the design,” Buchberger said.

He also referenced IAPMO’s Water Demand Calculator, which is a useful tool to help size piping systems when designing buildings. However, the calculator only gives a static picture of a moment in time within the system.

“We need a more dynamic picture of the entire plumbing system. If we can develop a realistic hydraulic model of premise plumbing systems that reflect the random nature of everyday use – and feel comfortable with all the operating components, the meters, heaters, software – then we can dovetail that with the water quality work and research being done at the EPA,” he said.

Watch EWTS On Demand

PMI members who missed the EWTS can access the recordings on demand for \$20 per session or \$69 for all sessions at tinyurl.com/4j2xc74j. Those who registered can watch the sessions again for free at pmi.kmsihosting.com.

Advanced Recycling Enables New Uses for Plastic Waste

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Plumbing manufacturers, like many other businesses, are facing decisions about how to help eliminate plastic waste.

Some corporations, government agencies, and the plastics industry have made commitments to promoting and using advanced recycling – a new way to reduce plastic waste and help power a circular economy.

The plastics industry has set an aggressive goal to reuse, recycle or recover 100% of plastic packaging in the United States by 2040, noted **Prapti Muhuri**, manager of recycling and recovery at the American Chemistry Council (ACC), and a co-presenter at an April Plumbing Manufacturers International (PMI) webinar discussing “Policy Drivers to Achieve a Circular Economy for Plastics.”

Under the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment set forth by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, about 400 brands have pledged to eliminate problematic and unnecessary plastic items and to make plastics reusable, recyclable or compostable. “For this reason, advanced recycling is poised to play a key role in that transition to use more recycled content in the marketplace,” Muhuri said.

Advanced recycling, also called chemical recycling, breaks down used plastics into chemical building blocks that can be assembled, disassembled and reassembled into raw materials for new chemicals and plastics, or into valuable products like waxes, lubricants or fuels, Muhuri explained.

Traditional recycling technologies, such as mechanical recycling of bottles and containers, have worked well but have limitations – especially when dealing with today’s lightweight packaging designs, according to Muhuri. “The beauty of advanced recycling is that it can offer a complimentary approach to

mechanical recycling and bypass the technical limitations to help meet future demand for recycled resin,” she said. Resin is the basic plastic raw material used to make new plastic products.

Legislation can help - or harm - efforts

One of the ACC’s goals is to educate both legislators and the public on the benefits of advanced recycling, said **Craig Cookson**, senior director of recycling and recovery for the plastics division of the ACC and co-presenter of the PMI webinar. He noted that the ACC is closely monitoring proposed legislation on plastic recycling.

“At the state level, we see a lot of legislation on plastics, some of it good, a lot of it not,” Cookson said.

The ACC supports several federal policy proposals, which Cookson discussed. First is the RECOVER Act, introduced by Reps. **Tony Cárdenas** (D-Calif.) and **Larry Bucshon** (R-Ind.), designed to help communities invest in recycling. The bill would establish \$500 million in a matching grants program for improving state and local infrastructure.

The RECYCLE Act, sponsored by Sens. **Rob Portman** (R-Ohio) and **Debbie Stabenow** (D-Mich.), proposes a new federal grant program through the Environmental Protection Agency to help educate citizens about their community recycling programs.

Finally, the Plastic Waste Reduction and Recycling and Research Act, introduced by Reps. **Haley Stevens** (D-Mich.) and **Anthony Gonzalez** (R-Ohio), seeks a federal strategic plan for plastic waste reduction and standards for plastics recycling technologies.

Cookson mentioned legislation that he said could disrupt the entire supply chain, namely the Break Free from



Plastic Pollution Act of 2020, sponsored by Rep. **Alan Lowenthal** (D-Calif.). The bill proposes placing a moratorium on plastic production for three years and halting any permitting of new and existing advanced recycling facilities. It also proposes incentives to use some materials that have significantly higher greenhouse gas emissions than plastics, Cookson explained.

“Focusing on banning technologies or banning plastics production isn’t the answer to addressing the plastic waste challenge or crisis. If we halt plastic production, it’s just going to go abroad. If we halt innovation, then we don’t have that opportunity to reuse and recover more plastic,” Cookson stated.

Looking ahead, Muhuri said the industry will focus more on the stringent specifications that advanced recycling technologies must meet to be sold. She noted that U.S. businesses in several sectors recently announced investments in advanced recycling.

For plumbing manufacturers that manufacture, convert or use recycled plastics, collaboration will be key to success, Cookson said. He encouraged PMI members to connect with him and Muhuri on Twitter and LinkedIn for the latest news on advanced recycling.

Watch It On Demand

PMI members who missed this webinar or others can watch them on demand at safep plumbing.org/members/webinars-videos under the Technical/Regulatory category.

Register for June 23 PMI Virtual Legislative Forum

An impressive group of speakers will be presenting critical information about pressing legislative and regulatory issues facing the plumbing manufacturing industry during the Plumbing Manufacturing International Virtual Legislative Forum, 11 a.m.–2 p.m. CT, June 23, open to PMI members.

Housing Outlook

Dr. Robert Dietz, chief economist and senior vice president of economics and housing policy at the National Association of Home Builders, will provide an outlook on housing as the pandemic winds down. His presentation will include trends in home building, apartment housing and remodeling, as well as the impacts of supply and labor shortages, interest rates, and access to capital.



Dr. Robert Dietz



Jon Williams



Anna Sullivan



Keith Smith

Procurement

Jon Williams and **Anna Sullivan**, attorneys at PilieroMazza's Government Contracts Group, will provide updates

on domestic sourcing requirements and their implications for plumbing manufacturers that are government contractors. They will cover the Buy American Act and other made-in-America laws, compliance tips and strategies, and the Biden administration executive order, "Ensuring the Future is Made in All of America by All of America's Workers."

Infrastructure

Keith Smith, senior vice president of public affairs and mobilization, National Association of Manufacturers, will describe the latest developments on infrastructure legislation, including options for how to pay for it with corporate and individual taxes and how to pass it with narrow Democratic Party majorities in the House and Senate.

EPA, Environmental Policy and More

More speakers have been invited to discuss issues including the Environmental Protection Agency and environmental policy. PMI will update members as more details are confirmed.

Don't miss this interactive briefing on issues that will affect the plumbing manufacturing industry. Learn more about the agenda and register today at tinyurl.com/2z9jtxh2.

EWTS Donates Proceeds to Water Sustainability Fund

*The co-conveners of the recent Emerging Water Technology Symposium have donated the proceeds of the conference to the Alliance for Water Efficiency's Mary Ann Dickinson Water Sustainability Fund. **Ron Burke**, AWE president and CEO, wrote the following letter of thanks:*

Thank you to the co-conveners of the 7th biennial Emerging Water Technology Symposium (EWTS) for donating the proceeds of the conference to the Alliance for Water Efficiency's (AWE) Mary Ann Dickinson Water Sustainability Fund.

The American Society of Plumbing Engineers, the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials, and Plumbing Manufacturers International joined AWE to present the conference virtually on May 11-12, 2021. The EWTS discussed ideas and approaches about emerging technologies coming to market, innovative green plumbing and mechanical concepts, and technological solutions for the water efficiency, plumbing and mechanical industries.

By contributing the conference proceeds to the AWE Mary Ann Dickinson Water Sustainability Fund, the co-conveners are supporting the mission of the EWTS and AWE's groundbreaking work to move the water efficiency field forward. **Mary Ann Dickinson** recently retired after working more than 50 years to improve water resource management, including nearly 14 years as CEO of AWE. At Mary Ann's request, the funds raised will support AWE research projects and the next update of the State Water Efficiency and Conservation Scorecard, which reviews, scores and grades each U.S. state for laws supporting water efficiency and climate resiliency planning.

AWE is very grateful for this generous contribution to our important water efficiency work.

Taking a Close Look (contd.)

Continued from page 1

to reduce the environmental impact of its products in the areas outside its direct control. Second only to growing the fiber, the greatest impact on water usage – almost 228 gallons – came from consumers frequently washing their jeans. Levi's discovered that washing jeans after 10 times the pants are worn, rather than every two times, reduced energy use, climate change impact, and water intake by 77%. Levi's "Care Tag for Our Planet" initiative encourages consumers to adopt care methods that use less energy and water.

My father was a middle school science teacher who taught me the value of taking a closer look at the things

that surround us in the natural world. Whenever we'd hike, he would point out different rocks, their strata, and then ask about the family of origin – igneous, sedimentary or metamorphic. While I didn't always enjoy the quiz, it did teach me to look beyond the surface of things that surround us.

As we accelerate into our post-pandemic world in the U.S., taking a closer look at the challenges revealing themselves in our changed environment will lead to those vital new opportunities and essential innovations to address the pressing problems ahead. As humorist **Will Rogers** said, "Don't let yesterday use up too much of today."



Alliances, Tech and Trust (contd.)

Continued from page 4

balancing and flushing valve technology, leak detection, and automated pump technology.

Power of partnerships

Panel members agreed that building alliances and working together will help our industry create resilient plumbing systems for the future. Many partnerships have been formed to address enhancing system designs, testing new technologies and seeking funding for research and new innovations.

For example, Leung mentioned an agreement between LA Department of Water and Power and IAPMO to test innovative energy and water conserving devices as part of the Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator (LACI). LACI was established to accelerate the commer-

cialization of clean technology and job creation in the LA region.

To build trust in water quality and sustainability, water utilities and others in the industry need to better communicate with the public, Leung said. He cited low trust issues in Los Angeles where he said, "only 50% of our folks trust water quality coming from the tap."

Organizations such as Plumbing Manufacturers International, ASPE and IAPMO, are partnering more to help with grassroots efforts needed to encourage better plumbing system designs and public and government support for safe and efficient plumbing and water systems, Lohr said. "We have more power in numbers," he concluded.

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