

Taking A Systemic Approach to Reducing Lead in Water

By Nate Kogler, President, PMI Board of Directors, Bradley Corporation



Nate Kogler

The thought of potentially having lead in school water is unsettling; exposure to lead can be harmful, particularly to developing children and pregnant women. A recent report from the Environmental America Research & Policy Center and U.S. PIRG Education Fund (tinyurl.com/y5tjqp9x) took nearly two dozen states to task for failing to protect children from lead in drinking water at school.

Of the 31 states studied, the report gave 22 an F grade. Washington, D.C., received the highest grade – a B+. The grades were determined by whether or not the states had requirements for lead testing, lead removal or remedial action, and other factors.

This report and other studies of a similar vein have resulted in states proposing new regulations.

For example, a bill introduced by Florida legislators would require public schools to filter lead from drinking water at the source on campuses built before 1986. Any water source that isn't filtered would be required to be labeled with a sign. If the bill, SB-66, passes, districts will be required to post on their websites a list of drinking water sources, when the filter was installed, and when it will be replaced next.

This approach, which focuses on the end-point of the water system, intercepts lead before it is consumed but presents many challenges – the need for manufacturers to produce an enormous quantity of filters, the costs of installing them, the maintenance required to clean and eventually replace them, and the requirement to post signs at non-filtered water sources.

This approach also fails to address the root cause of most lead in water systems – lead service lines. A study by the American Water Works Association (AWWA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “Contribution

of Service Line and Plumbing Fixtures to Lead and Copper Rule Compliance Issues,” (tinyurl.com/y4zqj2cw) concluded that 50% to 75% of the amount of lead measured at the tap originated from lead in service lines, 20% to 35% from on-premise piping, and only 1% to 3% from faucets and immediate connective piping. Because this study was published in 2008, prior to the 2014 Reduction in Lead in Water Act, the percentage coming from faucets is now likely lower.

The good news is that many communities have recognized the need to replace lead service lines. According to the Environmental Defense Fund, 16 states have proactive policies to support lead service line replacement, 106 communities have set a goal to eliminate lead service lines on public and private property, 50 communities have taken initial steps to replace lead service lines, and seven communities have completed lead service line replacement projects. Kudos to Framingham, Mass., Lansing, Mich., Madison, Wis., Medford, Ore., Sioux Falls, S.D., Springfield, Mass., and Spokane, Wash.!

As an industry, we have made important contributions to reduce lead in plumbing, as well. PMI and its members were leaders in developing and advocating for the Reduction of Lead in Drinking Water Act, which became effective on Jan. 4, 2014. This law lowered the amount of lead that can be used across the wetted surfaces of pipes, fittings and fixtures to a weighted average of 0.25% lead or less. Since then, plumbing manufactures have continued to innovate to replace lead in some products with brass alloys, other metals, ceramics or plastics.

As we continue to innovate, our job, too, is to educate policymakers and the general public about the root cause of lead in drinking water and to advocate for systemic solutions that address the root cause. Lead is a dangerous substance, that's for sure. Taking a band-aid approach that avoids addressing water infrastructural flaws such as lead service lines isn't the complete answer. Together, we as PMI members must focus attention on the right answer – healthy water systems that are safe for our children, families and communities.

Asking the Right Questions Leads to the Right Answers

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



Kerry Stackpole

How often have you heard in your company, “We are spending energy and resources on plans but aren’t moving the needle”? How about, “We just launched that product and customers are already asking for something else”?

Every leadership team is faced with these types of answers to important questions every business day. Aligning people, products, and processes in a way that allows you to solve your company’s key issues is a significant challenge under the best of circumstances. Vision, strategy, and tactics simply do not fly without alignment across the organization.

I recently spent time in the company of **Hal Gregersen**, executive director of the MIT Leadership Center. His new book, “Questions Are the Answer,” makes a strong case for training yourself and your teams to ask the right questions. How do you know which are the right questions to ask? Gregersen says effective questions illuminate, clarify and promote critical thought. Throughout the book are exam-

ples of questions that work best to inspire change, break down assumptions, or build and maintain fluidity in thinking. All of them serve to spark the imagination and shift the constructs we’ve built for ourselves without realizing it.

Gregersen writes, “Powerful organizational and industrial forces can keep any senior leader from asking (or hearing) uncomfortable questions, creating an answer-centric environment at his or her own peril.” The question is how do leaders escape the most dangerous blind spots? Since, as former Secretary of Defense **Don Rumsfeld** noted, “we don’t know what we don’t know,” we are often at a huge disadvantage. That’s where questions come into play.

In his article “Better Brainstorming” in the March-April 2019 issue of the Harvard Business Review, Gregersen relates a story about how he first uncovered the energy and power of brainstorming for questions and not answers. “Brainstorming for questions rather than answers,” he writes, “makes it easier to push past cognitive biases and venture into uncharted territory.”

One of the benefits of brainstorming for questions is that anyone can do it, and it helps if you have two or three

people with no direct experience with the problem. Their questions tend to be more compelling, and since they have no investment in the status quo, they aren’t afraid of the “elephants in the room” because they have no idea they are there.

Having great questions in mind will be especially useful to those of you joining us on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., or at the California State Capitol in Sacramento this month. Where is the needed funding for infrastructure such as roads, airports, waterways, ports and broadband telecommunications to support the manufacturing industry? What infrastructure projects are priorities Congress plans to support in the year ahead? Who supports the new US-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement (USMCA) and how likely is its approval in 2019? With more than 428,000 open jobs in manufacturing, what are our elected leaders doing to promote manufacturing education and skills training across America?

In his communications work with clients, author and management consultant **Stephen Covey** often quoted a biblical precept, “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.” If you’re searching for answers, that’s pretty sound advice.

Thanks to Our First Two PMI Pride Winners!

Thanks to IAPMO’s **Pete DeMarco** and Hansgrohe’s **Dianne Peabody**, who provided the password of “PMI Pride” and won the first two gift cards! Over the coming months, we plan to recognize more engaged PMI members! Do one or more of the following to qualify for a drawing:

- Participate in a PMI committee conference call or educational offering
- Create your log-in to members-only content at safep plumbing.org
- Share or comment on a PMI social media message
- Join the LinkedIn PMI Group page ([tinyurl.com/y2xafhkh](https://www.linkedin.com/company/safep plumbing)) or follow @SafePlumbing (twitter.com/safep plumbing) on Twitter
- Participate in any other kind of PMI activity

Your participation in these activities will automatically enter you into the drawing. Thanks for being an engaged PMI member.

pmi
pride



Dali Museum Setting for PMI's First Aspiring Leaders' Program

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

A highlight of the 2019 PMI Conference will be an Aspiring Leaders' Program planned for Nov. 4, 2019, at the Dali Museum in St. Petersburg, Fla. Within an environment dedicated to the work of the highly imaginative artist **Salvador Dali**, PMI's one-of-a-kind, innovation-training experience offers an ideal setting for PMI's top talent to tap into their personal creativity and innovation potential.

PMI member companies can nominate high-potential employees for this first-ever leadership gathering. Working in partnership with the museum, the one-day program will draw from examples in art and business "to inspire the ability to see and think differently, foster self-awareness, and instill a growth mindset," said PMI Education Manager **Emilee Hughes**, who is putting the final touches on the day's agenda.

The agenda will include a customized gallery tour focusing on leadership. Participants will gain a unique understanding of Dali's work, which harnessed his pure, boundless creativity into paintings, sculptures and other expressions that to this day define the world's understanding of surrealism. The day also will include creative thinking and career success workshops.

Weather permitting, program attendees may participate in activities taking place outdoors near the museum's garden, located on the Tampa Bay waterfront, creating a unique environment of learning and tranquility. The Mathematical Garden allows visitors to experience the relationship between math and nature, and a labyrinth in the southeast corner

invites exploration and well-being.

Dr. Kim Macuare, education manager of the Dali Museum's Innovation Labs, will use the four-step framework of the profile instrument FourSight – clarify, ideate, develop and implement – to identify each participant's creative problem-solving preferences. All participants will receive a discount on PMI Conference registration fees, an invitation to exclusive events throughout the conference, and a book by multigenerational workplace expert and conference keynote speaker **Lindsey Pollak**, the author of the book, "The Remix: How to Lead and Succeed in the Multigenerational Workplace."

Research highlighted in a recent New York Times article says that integrating art into an educational curriculum helps learners remember the information for a longer amount of time ([tinyurl.com/y46v34kd](https://www.nytimes.com/y46v34kd)). Also, **Daniel Pink**, a prominent business writer, is a champion of integrated arts curricula. "It starts with realizing that arts education is fundamental, not ornamental. We urgently need people to think like artists.

This is especially important in the work place. Creativity, design and the arts will be the way to prosper and succeed in the new economy. The arts are also a way to help people reach their potential and find their element."

The museum's stunning building, which opened in 2011, was designed by architect **Yann Weymouth**; it combines the rational with the fantastical: a simple rectangle with 18-inch thick, hurricane-proof walls out of which erupts a large free-form geodesic glass bubble known as the "The Enigma." Made of 1,062 triangular pieces of glass and standing 75 feet at its tallest point, The Enigma is a 21st century homage to the dome that adorns Dali's museum in Spain. Inside, the museum houses another unique architectural feature – a helical staircase recalling Dali's obsession with spirals and the double helical shape of the DNA molecule.

Look for more details and the opportunity to nominate high-potential employees for this unique opportunity in the next issue of Ripple Effect.



Getting to Know Troy Benavidez, LIXIL



Troy Benavidez

Current title and employer:

Vice president of public affairs for LIXIL Americas, home to the brands American Standard, GROHE and DXV.

My first job: Growing up on a cattle ranch in New Mexico there were always chores to be done, so I was working well before I was old enough to call it “work.” Feeding horses, chasing cattle or filling water tanks, if you were on the ranch you were working – it didn’t matter your age. Actually, it never really felt like work. I was with my family and all my cousins, so it was fun. It taught me the meaning of teamwork because you couldn’t accomplish much alone.

Length of time in the plumbing manufacturing industry: In October 2016, I joined the team at LIXIL Americas. Our brands have been in the bathrooms and kitchens of consumers for more than 140 years. Having the opportunity to work with great people on iconic brands that improve people’s daily lives is an amazing opportunity.

My proudest plumbing manufacturing career achievement: Plumbers are the unsung heroes who “Protect the health of the nation!” That’s the sentiment of the American Standard ad from 90 years ago that still rings true today. Plumbing jobs and other trade crafts are on a decline. I am proud to have established American Standard TradeUp, an initiative that seeks to increase the number of people who enter the plumbing profession by demonstrating the value of a career in plumbing. At LIXIL we foster partnerships with allies like local vocational schools, government officials, tradespeople, customers, and sales representatives to identify and

eliminate barriers for people to enter the profession.

I started a career in the plumbing manufacturing industry because: We have a unique opportunity to touch every person’s life each and every day. The products we make improve the health and well-being of people. All you have to do is look around the world to see the importance of the work we do. If you look at any natural disaster, the first thing people need is clean water and proper sanitation. I came from the pharmaceutical industry and we talked all the time about saving lives, and they do, but the plumbing industry continues to save lives every day. I think the industry is overlooked in how much we impact people’s health and well-being.

Advice I’d give someone just starting a career in the plumbing manufacturing industry: Don’t underestimate the value or impact you have on people and the responsibility you have to deliver meaningful products. We wake up in the morning, and the first thing most of us do (hopefully before we check our phone) might be to take a shower, wash our hands and face or brush our teeth. In the kitchen we get our family ready to head out the door; we might fill up a coffee pot or boil water for oatmeal. All of this requires us to do what we do best! We want to make life easier, safer and more comfortable for everyone, everywhere.

If I weren’t in the plumbing manufacturing industry: I’d probably be working in politics. Having worked on Capitol Hill for many years and in various state governments, I sometimes miss being part of the legislative and regulatory process.

What is your current role in PMI? What do you hope to accomplish in this role? As a member of the Advocacy/Government Affairs Committee, I want to continue to protect the interests of our industry by communicating

our collaborative views to policymakers and regulators on critical issues like water efficiency, sanitation and hygiene. It is also not just about me and the role I play with PMI but supporting my colleagues who also lead and participate in the other committees: Technical and Outreach/Communications. We as members are in charge of the future of our industry, so it is vital to stay active and have a seat at the table.

I’m currently reading: “BLOOD: Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup” by **John Carreyrou** is the story about Theranos, a medical technology company. I’m fascinated by how so many otherwise smart, thoughtful, deliberative individuals got caught up in a technology that never existed. People wanted the technology to exist so badly that they dropped all their usual safeguards, insight and intuition and put blinders on just to be a part of something big.

My hidden professional talent: To answer this question, I decided to turn to my team because they know me best and would be able to provide some insight. As a strategic thinker, I am able to guide my team beyond the details of any given task in order to view the big picture. I am a good diplomat with an ability to gently lead people toward consensus. Apparently, my laugh is contagious, which helps us to always have fun and, finally, I am known to never pass up a sweet treat. I probably should skip eating treats as a talent!

Best advice I ever received: My grandfather told me to focus on doing things that I’m passionate about and that I enjoy. I saw him live this every day working on our cattle ranch. So, I try to get as much enjoyment out of my work as I can. This reinforces my choice to be at LIXIL, where I am surrounded by great people and doing work that we enjoy.

My favorite movie: “No Way Out,”

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Proposed Changes to Calif. Privacy Act May Increase Lawsuits

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

Proposed changes to the California Consumer Privacy Act of 2018 (CCPA) could increase consumer lawsuits against businesses for personal data breaches. The changes also could make compliance with the law more difficult – and costly – for businesses, according to a recent article in the National Law Review ([tinyurl.com/y2amvkgc](https://www.tinyurl.com/y2amvkgc)).

The CCPA gives California residents significant control over their personal data, requiring California businesses to disclose personal information collected and how that information will be used or sold, while allowing consumers to control or delete that information.

A new piece of legislation, SB561 ([tinyurl.com/y4bw5xef](https://www.tinyurl.com/y4bw5xef)), proposes expanding California consumers' rights to sue companies for any violation of the CCPA. As enacted, the CCPA gives consumers the right to bring a civil action for statutory and actual damages in only one type of situation: when a business violates its duty to maintain reasonable personal data security procedures, allowing a consumer's nonencrypted or nonredacted personal information to be stolen or accessed and disclosed by unauthorized sources, said **Jerry Desmond**, PMI's California government affairs consultant.

Jerry added that SB 561, as it is currently worded, would broadly extend the ability of a consumer to bring a civil action to include any violation of the consumer's rights under the CCPA.

Proposed law relevant to makers of smart bathroom products

The law is relevant to PMI members as they continue innovating and introducing more smart bathroom products that use technology such as Amazon's Alexa and Apple's Siri, according to **Matt Sigler**, PMI's technical director. Smart technology can record shower use pat-

terns (i.e., temperature and duration), detect leaks by tracking water loss and water damage in residential properties, and even shut off water when a leak is identified. "There's definitely a fine line between the privacy consumers want to have and the convenience they seek through this technology," Matt said. Because state legislation varies and is difficult to track, PMI would like to see one consumer data protection law created at the federal level, he added.

While agreeing that private consumer data should be protected, PMI and other organizations are requesting a fair set of rules and enough time to implement any compliance measures, Jerry said. PMI has signed on to a California Chamber of Commerce coalition letter that states opposition to SB561 ([tinyurl.com/yyva8xbk](https://www.tinyurl.com/yyva8xbk)).

The letter states that "SB 561 creates an onerous and costly private right of action that will primarily benefit trial lawyers to sue for any violations of the California Consumer Privacy Act and removes businesses' 30-day right to cure an alleged violation of the CCPA as well as businesses' ability to seek guidance from the Attorney General on how to comply

with this confusing and complex law." In addition, the letter states that "given the massive investment businesses will be making to effectuate the rights provided to consumers in the CCPA, the state should be prepared to make a significant investment as well. And the goal of that investment should be compliance. Not lawsuits or attorneys' fees."

With the CCPA set to take effect on Jan. 1, 2020, the revisions proposed by SB 561 would amend the law before its effective date. The bill passed through the Senate Judiciary Committee, the first legislative committee, by a 6-2 vote on April 9, Jerry stated.

The CCPA was essentially modeled after the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, which took effect in May 2018 and introduced new rules and stricter penalties for businesses handling the personal data of European citizens. Since CCPA was enacted, other states, including Washington, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, are following California's lead with similar legislation.

To learn more about the CCPA, visit the California Legislative Information website: ([tinyurl.com/y23rmd2c](https://www.tinyurl.com/y23rmd2c)).

Getting to Know Troy Benavidez (Contd.)

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the story about a Russian spy who is a mole in the Defense Department. I like the political intrigue but given our current times and controversy on this issue, there may or may not be some truth to this conspiracy. Who knows?

When I face a challenge at work (or in life): I tend to be more logical in my approach and seek to understand what's most important before making a decision. I remain even-keeled and open-minded while listening to others. I feel comfortable negotiating my opinion but once a resolution is decided, I will support the outcome 100%.

In my spare time: I like to call myself a runner, but I'm not a very good one. I do enjoy the solitude a long run provides. I have run a few marathons, but they are getting harder and harder each year so it might be time to try something new.

Packaging, Recycled Water Bills on PMI's Radar in Calif.

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

California Legislative Update



California creates a large volume of legislation affecting plumbing products and the industry. Consequently, PMI keeps a close eye on those bills to help protect PMI members' interests.

As the state continues to push for ways to conserve and reuse more water, PMI is working to ensure no unintended consequences occur from those measures, including any negative effects on the performance of PMI members' products, according to **Jerry Desmond**, PMI's California government affairs consultant.

Opposing AB1080 and SB54 plastic packaging bills

PMI supports measures to reduce plastic waste, and many of its members have established sustainability goals to use more recyclable packaging and increase recycling rates. However, PMI and other organizations have formed a coalition in opposition to two companion measures that would phase out the sale and distribution of single-use plastic packaging: The California Circular Economy and Plastic Pollution Reduction Act (AB1080 ([tinyurl.com/yxarvk8h](https://www.tinyurl.com/yxarvk8h))) and SB54 ([tinyurl.com/y3j9z2ty](https://www.tinyurl.com/y3j9z2ty)).

The coalition sent a letter to the California Assembly Committee on Natural Resources explaining its concerns about

the bills. The letter states that the legislation uses "terms that are unclear and vague, establishes implementation timelines that are not practical, and provides CalRecycle with open-ended authority to impose new mandates on businesses operating in the state."

The bills, meant to address the growing plastic pollution threat, require the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery to adopt regulations to reduce and recycle 75% of single-use packaging and products sold or distributed in California by 2030.

Monitoring water fees bills

PMI is keeping an eye on a group of water fees bills that may affect water usage rates, water availability, and the push to use more recycled water indoors, Jerry said.

The bills include funding to help disadvantaged communities address drinking water issues. They include AB217 ([tinyurl.com/yxk4pehy](https://www.tinyurl.com/yxk4pehy)), AB402 ([tinyurl.com/yxpk7h84](https://www.tinyurl.com/yxpk7h84)), SB200 ([tinyurl.com/y26zamg7](https://www.tinyurl.com/y26zamg7)), and SB669 ([tinyurl.com/y4g3o48m](https://www.tinyurl.com/y4g3o48m)).

For example, the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund (AB217) would establish a new state fund for secure access to safe drinking water and proposes a water fee of 50 cents per service connection on all public water systems to be paid by California homeowners. The bill would require each public water system to submit the collected fees to the California State Water Resources Control Board starting on July 1, 2020.

Advising on water usage limitations and product performance

PMI is contributing insight and feedback to state agencies as they implement new laws on water conservation and drought planning passed by the California State Legislature and signed into law by former Governor Jerry

Brown: SB606 and AB1668 ([tinyurl.com/y3e7h4t7](https://www.tinyurl.com/y3e7h4t7)). The bills could result in lower water use rates that could impact plumbing product performance.

PMI has nominated **Cambria McLeod**, from Kohler Co., to serve on the advisory group providing input to the two state agencies implementing the measures, which would establish a 55-gallons-per-day limit as the standard for indoor residential water use, beginning January 1, 2025. The legislation requires the California State Water Resources Control Board, in coordination with the California Department of Water Resources, to:

- adopt long-term standards for the efficient use of water and performance measures for commercial, industrial and institutional water use on or before June 30, 2022.
- conduct necessary studies and investigations and make recommendations, no later than Oct. 1, 2021, for these standards and performance measures.

Remaining engaged on recycled water issue

PMI continues to keep tabs on the use of recycled water in California. Leading a coalition in 2017, PMI helped to place a hold on a California mandate for the indoor use of recycled water in newly constructed residential and commercial buildings. However, the issue persists as two new pieces of legislation would establish water recycling criteria and initiate a new public regulatory process on recycled water: AB292 ([tinyurl.com/y3bqyurf](https://www.tinyurl.com/y3bqyurf)) and AB1180 ([tinyurl.com/y4dlrapd](https://www.tinyurl.com/y4dlrapd)).

AB292 requires the California State Water Resources Control Board to establish uniform water recycling criteria for direct potable reuse through raw water augmentation. AB1180 requires the state water board to update the statewide criteria for nonpotable recycled water uses by Jan. 1, 2023.

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Inaugural National Holiday Honors Trades Workers

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

An industrial repair service center in Youngstown, Ohio, has taken matters into its own hands and has established a national holiday to honor those who do the “handy work” that is often taken for granted by many.

City Machine Technologies, Inc., has declared May 1 as the first National Skilled Trades Day (tinyurl.com/y6ycvqlq) in celebration of skilled trades workers and to increase awareness about the benefits of these trades jobs in the United States. The holiday will be celebrated on the first Wednesday of each May every year.

Skilled trades jobs vary greatly, and part of the reason interest in these jobs has dropped in the last 30 years is due to a lack of awareness of how many different occupations require skilled trades people, states the news release about National Skilled Trades Day. From plumbers to machinists, mechanics to welders, and electricians to construction workers, a skilled trades worker is anyone who is highly trained in a specific occupation to provide a service or produce goods.

All of these jobs are fundamental to our communities and economy, as they are jobs that the average person is not trained to do. Unfortunately, these same jobs are dropping in popularity due to an increased push toward four-year degrees; only 20% of high school seniors have indicated interest in learning about or entering a skilled trades job following high school graduation, the news release states.

SkillsUSA provides educational programs and events for students

Before the establishment of this holiday, however, there were people and businesses working to spread the word about the importance of skilled trades



NATIONAL SKILLED TRADES DAY

workers. SkillsUSA (skillsusa.org) – a partnership between students, teachers and industry – has been working to help ensure America has the workforce that it needs. SkillsUSA provides educational programs and events in support of career and technical education in the nation’s classrooms. SkillsUSA serves more than 360,000 instructors and students annually, and has 13,000 school chapters in 54 states. Anyone can join SkillsUSA as a member, and there are even opportunities to support SkillsUSA or one of its school chapter as an official partner (skillsusa.org/about/sponsors).

SkillsUSA has been signing high school seniors to “letters of intent” for a career in the trades. For example, on May 8, Klein Tools will have a #SkillsNationalSigningDay (twitter.com/SkillsUSA) with NFL quarterback **Jimmy Garoppolo** and his father, **Tony**, a career electrician (tinyurl.com/y3cwxjno).

If you or your business are interested in promoting the importance of skilled trades workers, City Machine Technologies has posted ideas on its website (tinyurl.com/y3otufko), which includes a National Skilled Trades Day reading list.

California Legislative Update (Contd.)

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PMI plans to remain proactive and will use a Virginia Tech study on the health ramifications of indoor recycled water use, being conducted by Virginia Tech engineering professor **Marc Edwards**, as guidance, according to **Matt Sigler**, PMI’s technical director.

Reviewing new bill on performance standards for flushable products

PMI has reviewed the provisions of legislation relating to flushable products to ensure that the standards for flushability

are consistent with the proper functioning of PMI member products. AB1672 (tinyurl.com/y2b42zft) would prohibit labeling a covered product as safe to flush, safe for sewer systems, or safe for septic systems unless the product is a flushable wipe that meets the performance standards of the International Water Services Flushability Group testing methods and criteria for flushability (tinyurl.com/y5besmu3). The bill also would require nonflushable products to be labeled clearly to communicate that they should not be flushed.

'Made in the USA': How Your Company Can Address the Manufacturing Skills Gap

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

America is focused on bolstering its manufacturing and working hard to put out more products with the words "Made in the USA" stamped on the tag. This is all fine and great, but have these words come true? Has American manufacturing truly been revitalized?



The shortage of workers – let alone those who are trained in the most up-to-date technological advancements – poses a threat to the industry. As a result, the manufacturing field has had to tackle its skills gap head-on. The field of manufacturing is growing and ever-changing; new technologies and innovations are always being discovered, thus expanding the industry. However, the stubborn problem of a lack of skilled workers remains, and what good is an expanding industry without those who can run it?

To expand the pool of skilled workers, many manufacturing communities are taking a long, hard look at the youth population; offering apprenticeships and internships for high school and college-aged kids is a very beneficial way to peak the interest of these students to consider a career in manufacturing. Not only that, it is a very efficient way to create a bigger workforce base for manufacturing companies looking for employees.

Bradley Corporation partners with GPS Education Partners to offer apprenticeships

Take, for example, Plumbing Manufacturers International member Bradley Corporation. According to Bradley's careers webpage, the company offers a formal apprenticeship program, paid internships, and a high school youth apprenticeship program it formed in partnership with GPS Education Partners. Bradley Corporation is a great example of what companies can do to train and develop the workforce of tomorrow to be skilled and ready to be deployed across the U.S.

Read More Online

Read the rest of this article on our new PMI@Work blog: safeplumbing.org/communications/pmiblog

PMI@Work explores efforts to develop the manufacturing workforce for the future, particularly among PMI members. If you'd like to submit a post or content for consideration, contact PMI communications team member **Ray Valek** at ray@valekco.com.



While American manufacturers position themselves for growth, students still have limited exposure to technical training, which means that not enough of them are choosing manufacturing careers. GPS Education Partners (GPS) helps educators, businesses and communities to work together to close the workforce gap. Companies like Bradley Corporation who work in partnership with GPS make the goal of "Closing the Gap" much more attainable.

Each school year, Bradley opens its Menomonee Falls facility to high school juniors and seniors who take academic classes in its onsite education center during morning hours, and work for an hourly apprentice wage within the company's plant during afternoons.

Read more: safeplumbing.org/communications/pmiblog

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