

LEAD INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

Graybar Building, 420 Lexington Avenue

New York, N. Y.

June 13, 1933.

TO MEMBERS OF THE LEAD INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION:

LEAD IN PLUMBING CODES

Ever since the first of the year the Lead Industries Association has been making an intensive drive to procure modification of plumbing codes in the thickly populated areas along the Atlantic seaboard, to strengthen the position of lead versus substitute materials. As you doubtless know, there has been a disturbing trend away from lead for many years which has militated against its widespread use in some parts of the average home plumbing system and has, therefore, decreased the volume of lead pipe and sheet used in plumbing.

The Directors of the Lead Industries Association felt that, unless some of the regulations at present unfavorable to lead were modified, it was illogical to expect any notable increase in the demand for lead plumbing supplies. Accordingly, in an economical way we have begun a modest but concerted effort to improve the status of lead in plumbing codes and, if our work meets with success, propose gradually to expand our field. Formerly, we only endeavored to correct situations where members may have requested assistance as in Washington and Buffalo.

In connection with our work in New Jersey, we have aroused so much interest that, during the week of May 15th, we were invited to be guests of the Master Plumbers Association of the State of New Jersey, at their Annual Convention in Atlantic City. On short notice we prepared an exhibit emphasizing some of the features of a plumbing code which we recommend - such as lead under bathroom floors, service lines and shower pans - and calling attention to the grave consequence for the plumbing craft which had attended the trend away from lead. We pointed out how the plumber who had neglected to cultivate skill in the use of lead - which only a plumber can install properly - was encouraging incompetent craftsmen to engage in plumbing. As a result of our work a speech was delivered by one of the master plumbers appealing to the convention to return to lead. A copy of this address is attached.



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The combined effect of our educational work plus the exhibit which the master plumbers had a chance to see and the interest in the subject aroused by the lead speech on the floor of the convention, caused a resolution to be passed as follows; - the strongest endorsement in favor of lead I have ever seen by any plumbing organization:

WHEREAS through standardization and simplification of connective devices in the plumbing field there has been a constant tendency to introduce and use threaded connections and unions requiring little technical ability beyond a strong arm and a wrench, thus lessening the knowledge and mechanical requirements for craftsmanship, and

WHEREAS the use of such devices has encouraged the employment of cheaper kinds of pipe and materials despite the known fact of their relatively short life when compared with lead which has been the plumbers' material since ancient days, to the detriment of the property owner in the lack of trouble free permanence of plumbing pipes and connections such as was his in the days of lead waste and round wiped solder plumbers joints; now therefore be it

RESOLVED by the New Jersey State Master Plumbers Association in Annual Meeting assembled at Atlantic City, (N.J.) this 20th day of May, 1933, that it is to the best interests of the property owner to have a plumbing system properly designed and installed with fixed connections and branch wastes and vents and with water services and water supplies of standard lead waste or water pipe of weights suitable for the several purposes, such pipe to be installed by journeymen plumbers skilled in the art of installing and connecting by means of round wiped plumbers joints; and to that end be it further

RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be placed in the hands of every member of this organization with request that the purpose of it be brought to the attention of the proper authorities in their several jurisdictions, to the end that the use of lead rough work and water supply be increased as rapidly and to as great an extent as may be possible.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the incoming Executive Board and some committees advance this resolution at their some meetings.

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The Secretary of the convention was instructed to communicate with the numerous local sections of master plumbers throughout New Jersey, requesting them individually to help restore lead to its rightful position in plumbing codes.

One result of this effort will be to facilitate our work in the State of New Jersey immensely. Moreover, it breaks the ice, so to speak, and enables us to approach the nearby States of New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and others with every prospect that we can duplicate the result in New Jersey. Although we haven't sufficient funds to pursue our work on a nation wide scale, we shall be very glad to help any member who has a local situation to meet where lead is not receiving adequate consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Secretary.

Gentlemen: - It affords me great pleasure to be granted this valuable opportunity to speak to you briefly upon the subject of ways and means to strengthen and secure our position in the plumbing field.

I appreciate the fact that our trade has greatly benefitted in recent years by the cooperation of manufacturers in the improvement of fixtures. I also realize that their interest in the plumber and in educating him in the art of estimating and salesmanship has been of material help to us. However, I feel that we, the members of our various associations, individually and collectively, have to our own detriment allowed much of the art and craft to drop right out of our trade, affecting our business and profits by encouraging unskilled competition. This we have done simply by standing by while our materials have been standardized and simplified to such an extent that the services of the skilled craftsman may be and often are entirely dispensed with.

Had this condition been accompanied by a corresponding improvement in the quality of plumbing installations we could find no fault, for our first consideration should be for the people we serve. But in many instances it has lead to less sanitary and less permanent installations, and to work done by incompetent handy men.

This deplorable state of affairs must not be permitted to continue and we must look to our associations for support and concerted effort in overcoming these conditions. One way to relieve the situation materially would be by the more extensive use of lead for the roughing in and for water services where possible. This can be accomplished by only slight revisions to plumbing codes in most cases, and some of our far sighted members have already accomplished much in this respect in their own towns. Such revisions not only restore to the plumber his art and protect his business, but improve certain parts of the plumbing system now permitted to be made entirely in galvanized iron pipe.

I wish to emphasize that the standardization of plumbing materials is highly commendable so long as it leads to improved plumbing and guarantees satisfactory workmanship. But I wish to conclude my talk to you, fellow members, with an earnest appeal for organized action in this direction, so that we may, in the very near future, be prepared to recover that very lucrative and desirable part of a work which is essentially ours.