

# Edward Howard &Co.

Public Relations Counsel  
Cleveland and Akron, Ohio  
an affiliate of Hill and Knowlton, Inc

One Cascade Plaza, Akron, Ohio 44308  
216-376-6500 FAX: 216-376-9379

to: As Listed \*  
from: Dan Stanowick *DS*  
subject: AWWA Letter

date: February 18, 1992  
copies to: Bob Burnett  
PRO Members  
Nora Jacobs  
Dave Meeker

The attached is from the current (February) issue of AWWA Journal. It is an abbreviated version of a letter you helped draft last year in response to a technical article about plastic pipe permeation. Even at this late date, the letter delivers several important messages about PVC pipe, not the least of which is that those of us who support its use stand ready to defend it from unwarranted attacks.

\* Roy Gottesman  
Don Goodman  
Mike Barish  
Bob Walker

RECEIVED

FEB 18 1992

Sherry M. Carr

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## LETTERS

### AC Ban Lifted

I read with interest the article in the November 1991 JOURNAL about the Loma Prieta earthquake. I was concerned, however, about the inaccuracy of a statement on page 38 that begins "... it is recognized that installation of AC (asbestos-cement) pipe has ceased in the United States because of potential health risks associated with its use. ..." It is true that in 1986 the US Environmental Protection Agency did issue a rule that would have banned the manufacture, use, and installation of AC pipe. But this ban was reversed by a court decision Oct. 18, 1991. Your readers need to know that AC pipe is still being manufactured and installed in the United States.

B.J. Pigg  
A/C Pipe Producers Association

*The November JOURNAL went to press before the court decision was issued. An announcement of the court's decision to overturn the ban appeared in the Update section of the December JOURNAL.—Editor*

### Article on PVC Pipe Raises Questions

An article in the August 1991 issue ("Contamination of Potable Water by Permeation of Plastic Pipe" by Thomas H. Holsen et al) cited several extreme examples in which potable water conveyed by plastic pipe had been contaminated by the permeation of certain chemicals. Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe was not cited in those examples but was reported to have been implicated in a few other incidents. I am concerned that doubts may have been raised about PVC's true performance properties relating to water quality.

PVC pipe has long been known throughout the water industry for delivering water without affecting quality and purity. Extensive studies in this country and abroad—the results of which have been published in JOURNAL AWWA over the years—confirm that PVC pipe can be used to transport water without harming consumers.

A study carried out in 1983 for the Vinyl Institute by Battelle Memorial Institute undertook a series of tests to compare the susceptibility of ductile iron, PVC, and asbestos-cement pipe to permeation. In the case of all three materials permeation did occur, but only at pipe joints, not through pipe walls—showing that any gasketed pipe system (including metal) is vulnerable to extreme concentrations of soil contaminants. Additional testing showed that non-

gasketed PVC pipe was highly resistant to permeation.

Anyone who would like additional information about PVC pipe's water quality properties may request a copy of a recently updated technical bulletin on the subject from our offices at (201) 890-9299.

Roy T. Gottesman  
The Vinyl Institute

I found Holsen's article interesting and valuable. I have a comment, however, about the conclusion that sand should not be used as a backfill in place of native soil.

On the basis of the data and analysis in the article, I agree. But what if the chemical intrusion was a one-time occurrence rather than the implied steady-state value? Sand would seem better in such a case because the organic chemical could leach out rapidly and no longer be in the vicinity of the pipe. Soil, on the other hand, would retain the organic chemical and provide a long-term source that would permit permeation.

Without having done any calculations, I expect the choice of backfill would depend on the assumed behavior of the source.

James R. Divine  
ChemMet Ltd.

*Holsen responds:* I agree with Divine's observation that, under certain scenarios, sand used as backfill may better protect pipes against permeation by organic chemicals than soils of higher organic content. However, because plastic pipes are almost exclusively used in the vadose zone, it is unlikely that a pipe would be exposed to a pulse of organic chemical followed by extensive leaching of clean water that would remove the contaminant. If such a situation did arise and the activity of the organic chemical near the pipe was low enough that permeation rates were slower than leaching rates, sand might better protect the pipe from permeation than soils.

### Erratum

In the January Roundtable, two photos were labeled wrong, although the quotes that appeared below the photographs were attributed to the proper speaker. The two participants are correctly identified below.



Gerald R. Iwan



A.T. Rolan

# Journal

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