

MWQA News



Plumbing Code Brings New Interpretations, Surprises

By Jeff Hill

The new plumbing code, so long considered and carefully reviewed, should have come in with a whimper, but it came in with a bang. Surprises and funny interpretations seem to be the story of the day. For example, bathroom groups. The code requires a 1" water softener for homes with three of four bathrooms. This was not a surprise to water conditioning people who reviewed the code. Most water softener controls today are larger and are considered 1" valves. Inspectors have no way to see that, without reviewing literature, and look to the connection to judge the valve. So dealers are frustrated by having to purchase a 1" connection yoke for those valves, only to purchase and install reducers to match the ¾" plumbing in the home.

Water softeners for homes with more than four bathroom groups must be engineered – that is, carefully selected to meet the water flow of the bathrooms and the other fixtures in the home or multi-housing unit. That, of course, is what good plumbers, water conditioning dealers and water conditioning manufacturers do in large homes, restaurants, apartment buildings...on every application.

One inspector in the south metro carried this requirement a step farther, however. He interpreted the language to require that a professional engineering firm must be hired, review the plumbing and the water softener and provide his or her written certification of the selection. WQA has done a preliminary review of the code and does not believe that "engineered" requires a professional engineer and is making additional contacts with IAPMO.

IAPMO, the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials, wrote the national code that Minnesota selected and modified to create the new Minnesota 2015 Plumbing Code. Another inspector is taking the position that the manufacturer's literature should state the number of bathroom groups. MWQA will be talking to Plumbing Board members about their understanding.

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry appears to be taking the rational position, noting that professional engineering stamps are not typically required in any aspect of residential construction. Minnesota law is strong in stating that piping systems in residential and commercial buildings can be designed by a Minnesota licensed plumber. While plumbers and water conditioning contractors will likely be allowed to engineer these systems, this has gained great visibility, and the responsibility is on us to document the flow ratings and pressure loss of our equipment for building officials.

Surge suppressor requirements really came out of the blue. One or two inspectors have determined that water softeners may have "fast acting" valves, which with the new code requires expensive and certified surge suppressors. Of course, piston valves began to dominate new softener designs in the 1960s and today water softeners have pressure balanced pistons, slow moving valves and low flow brine tank refill. (i.e. careful studies indicate that homeowners prefer not to be awakened at 2 am.)

Most water softeners are the quietest operating device in a home in 2016. When questioned, however, water conditioning contractors should be prepared to operate their valves through each position to prove the lack of water hammer. Water conditioning dealers should actually welcome this scrutiny of water hammer, since hammer from other devices, particularly in a commercial setting, is the most common cause of softener tank or seal failures.

Plumbers and homeowners have been surprised by the requirement for an air gap device for their dishwashers, not unlike an RO. Other states have long had this requirement, while Minnesota code writers have rejected it. Apparently it went unnoticed as Minnesota modified the IAPMO code, so we are not stuck with it for at least three years. Residential irrigation backflow preventers now require annual inspection, as well.

There may be more surprises and more unique interpretations on the horizon. The introduction of the new code has sent many inspectors to class and to spend time reviewing the book – not a bad thing – but it has taken us all out of business as usual. Send your experiences to Lori Jansen at MWQA. We will communicate with the Department of Labor and Industry, WQA and the major national manufacturers. Mike Herman, Water Conditioning Plumbing Board member, will carry our concerns and information to that Board. The Plumbing Board is the final arbiter in the interpretation of the code.

Minnesota Water Quality Association

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MWQA Represented at Governor's Water Summit

MWQA was well represented at Governor Dayton's water quality summit, held in St. Paul in February. Several MWQA members, as well as representatives from WQA, attended the event that was held to discuss the state's emerging water challenges. Hundreds of activists, lobbyists, farmers, legislators and regulators attended the event.

Dayton has made water quality a priority after a report released by the Pollution Control Agency showed half the lakes and streams in southern Minnesota are not safe for fishing or swimming. Another report recently released stated that nearly two-thirds of test wells in central Minnesota are contaminated with nitrates, most likely from fertilizers.

Representatives from rural soil and water conservation districts, fertilizer manufacturers and activist groups voiced their concerns about how to approach the issue and who is at fault for the decline in water quality, and how to remedy and pay to clean up the state's water.

Dayton has indicated he will meet with commissioners and staff to formulate policies based on what they learned at the summit. He has also indicated that Minnesota will hold a week of action events in April regarding clean water, and will create an online destination for information about water quality.

Among the topics discussed at the summit were: sustaining Minnesota's water supply, water and wastewater infrastructure, and investing in clean water. A panel of representatives in the water quality industry, including companies such as Pentair, Ecolab and Dow Water & Process Solutions, also participated in the summit.

Updates on the Governor's initiative regarding water quality can be followed on the state's website, located at <http://mn.gov/governor/dayton>.

MWQA Action Alert

MWQA has been working to get state legislation passed that would allow water conditioning journeymen and masters to make installations in small commercial settings. The legislation continues to be opposed by the Minnesota Pipe Trades who are only protecting what they see as their territory, not looking out for what is best for Minnesotans seeking the highest quality and most economical water treatment solutions.

To get this done, we are going to need everyone, and also employees and friends and family, to contact their State Representative and Senator. Attached is information on how to do this, including how to find out who your legislators are. It should only take 5 to 10 minutes of your time using the language attached to this newsletter to send two emails. Please don't delay doing this, legislative deadlines are quickly approaching so we need to get this done now. If you have any questions about contacting your legislators, contact our lobbyist, Mark Haase, directly - mahaase@gmail.com or 612-819-0738. If you have time, please also let Mark know if you did this and what response you get.

Need Credit For Your License?

Minnesota Statutes require that all persons holding Plumbing, Water Conditioning Journeyman or Master licenses must attend classes to obtain credits (CEU) prior to renewing a license. Water Conditioning Licenses require 4 total CEU to renew. Plumbing Licenses require 16 credits.

If you have not obtained your credit and your license expires on December 31, 2016, you can get all the credit you need by attending the MWQA Convention on October 12-13, 2016. We will offer CEU for both Water Conditioning Master and Journeyman licenses, plus credit that can apply toward Plumbing licenses. Check your license status at the DOLI website to find out if you need to attend the classes.

Do you want more information on anything in this newsletter?

Feel free to contact our Board of Directors if you have comments or questions.

You can reach them at:

Minnesota Water Quality Association

PO Box 48452

Minneapolis, MN 55448

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MWQA Pushes On With Legislative Proposal

By Mike Herman, President

As you know, MWQA was instrumental in getting bipartisan legislation introduced in 2015, and last fall the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry facilitated discussions with us and with the trades. We made progress in those talks, but at this point there is still some opposition from the Pipe Trades on the scope provision of the bill.

We are committed to moving the bill forward this legislative session, which began March 8. We are asking for help from all our members. Our lobbyist is working to secure committee hearings and votes we need, and has contacted

some MWQA members who live in key legislative districts, asking them to contact their legislators and join in on meetings. Please return his calls or emails promptly if he contacts you. In addition, if you have a good relationship with legislators let him know if you haven't already. You can contact him directly if you have questions: Mark Haase, mahaase@gmail.com, 612-819-0738.

Attached is a description of the part of our legislation regarding scope that we are using to educate legislators about the bill. We will keep you updated as things progress.

In order to make this all possible, MWQA

requires the monetary support from all of our members. The initiative to get our bill introduced during this legislative session will cost MWQA approximately \$30,000.

I want to again thank all of those members who have donated toward the MWQA legal fund in the past, and I again ask for your support in securing the necessary funds to accomplish this important task. I would ask that each of you review the importance of the attached to our industry, review the work that MWQA and our lobbyist have accomplished, and consider donating again to MWQA's legislative fund. If you have any questions regarding this please feel free to contact me directly at any time.

DOLI Publishes License Exam Guide

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry now has a Plumbing and Water Conditioning Exam Guide on their website.

The guide includes information such as requirements for taking the exam, how the exam is administered, and sample questions and diagrams. Although the guide is not to be used specifically as a study guide, it is helpful to become familiar with the format of the exam prior to taking it, and this guide may help with that. The guide has a section that outlines knowledge areas that applicants should study prior to taking an exam.

At this time, Minnesota license exams are based on the 2009 Minnesota Plumbing Code, not the new IAPMO code. The test is based on Minnesota Chapter 4715, Chapter 144, 325 and 326.

You can download the exam guide by following this link:
http://www.dli.mn.gov/CCLD/PDF/plumbing_guide.pdf

Copies of the old 2009 Plumbing Code can be downloaded at
<http://www.ci.chanhassen.mn.us/DocumentCenter/Home/View/9>

If you have questions regarding exams, visit the DOLI website. They have information regarding applications, exam dates and locations. One of the best ways to prepare for the exam is to become familiar with the Plumbing Code. The test is open book, and if you know where to look for answers, it will help you immensely when taking the exam. DOLI will give you an exam book to use.

Call DOLI ahead of time to verify that they are using the 2009 Code book, as this may change at any time now that the new Code has officially been published.

Online Member Directory

Did you know you can include your logo and a link to your website on the MWQA web page? Please take a look at your business listing on our member page. Contact Lori Jansen at info@mwqa.com if anything needs changing. We would be happy to include your logo, and also can provide the MWQA logo for you to include on your company website.

The website is located at www.mwqa.com Click on "Member Directory" to bring up the list of members. Dealerships are listed alphabetically, with Associate Members at the end of the list.



New Plumbing Code Available

It's here: the new Minnesota Plumbing Code. The Code, which is the IAPMO 2012 Code, is available by mail. Get yours at Minnesota's Bookstore in St. Paul. The new book can be ordered on their website for \$98 at www.minnesotasbookstore.com, or you can call them at 651-297-3000 or 800-657-3757.



Thanks to Members For Your Support

\$25,000 +

DriessenGroup/Culligan (9 Dealerships)
Albert Lea - Austin - Benson -Kasson
Montevideo - Northfield - Owatonna -
Rochester - Waseca

This diagram illustrates the levels of donations to the legislative fund by MWQA members (and by some non-members) since 2013. We will revise this as more donations are received. No one donated between \$5,000- \$9,000.

\$10,000 - \$24,999

Packard Group/Culligan (12 Dealerships)
Anoka - Baxter - Bemidji - Bottled Water
Buffalo - Cloquet - Faribault - Minnetonka -
Pine City - St. Cloud - Stillwater - Wadena

\$2,000 - \$5,000

Sterling Water
Aquarius Water

Ecolab
Robert B. Hill Company

\$1,000 - \$1,999

ABA Water Systems
Culligan La Crosse
Culligan Red Wing

McGowan Water
Mike's Softener Service/
Worthington Softener

Frakco
Milbert Culligan
Culligan Winona

\$100 - \$999

Arrowhead Water
Ben Holzer Unlimited
Better Water Industries
Commers Water
Culligan Elbow Lake
Culligan Fairmont
Culligan Madelia
Culligan St. Peter
EcoWater of Marshall
Erkens Water

Haferman Water
Hellenbrand
Hidrocare
Culligan Hibbing
Jahnke Water
Kandi Water
McKays Company
Merle's Water
Northland Water
Rainy Water Conditioning

Range Water
Schultz Soft Water
United Salt
Viqua
Water Conditioning, Inc.
Water Control
Zachman's Water
Culligan of Virginia
Aldex Chemical

MINNESOTA WATER QUALITY ASSOCIATION

The Minnesota Water Quality Association (MWQA) is an association of household, commercial, and industrial water quality improvement businesses located throughout Minnesota. MWQA seeks to constantly upgrade the standards of Minnesota's water quality improvement industry and the qualifications of its members.

Commercial Water Conditioning Equipment Installation

PROBLEM

Minnesota licensing regulations allow water conditioning journeymen and masters to install water conditioning equipment in single family residences, but not in any other settings. However, the water issues, treatment process, and equipment involved are no different in small commercial applications; and current training and licensing requirements make water conditioning journeymen and masters the specialists most qualified to do this work safely. The current limitation may jeopardize water safety and unnecessarily increases costs to consumers and small businesses, particularly in rural areas where water treatment needs are the greatest and water safety concerns are most pronounced.

SOLUTION

MWQA proposed legislation would create a clear and more logical line for water conditioning work. It would allow water conditioning journeymen and masters to install water conditioning equipment in small commercial settings only when the water distribution system has been established by a licensed plumber, including a valve that isolates the water conditioning equipment from the system; and does not allow the installation of any piping between the *nearest* isolation valve and the water supply. This allows the water distribution system to always be completely and properly isolated from the installation. It would not limit the current ability of licensed plumbers to do this work as well.

BENEFITS

Water Safety: Concerns about Minnesota's water infrastructure and related drinking water safety have been highlighted in recent reports and events. In rural areas, where central water systems are much less available, water conditioning journeymen and masters are on the front lines dealing with these issues, with the knowledge and experience needed to keep drinking water safe not only for homes but also small businesses and their customers. They are the only licensed professionals who are *required* to demonstrate training and experience in water testing, treatment, and water softening and filtration equipment installation. Allowing them to install water conditioning equipment in small businesses as well as single family homes will provide the flexibility and expertise needed to deal with Minnesota's emerging drinking water safety issues.

Economic Vitality: The current restriction on the scope of the water conditioning license creates unnecessary costs to consumers and businesses and unnecessarily restricts employment opportunity and business growth. A recent White House report on occupational licensing noted that occupational licenses often "create substantial costs... are not in sync with the skills needed for the job...raise the price of goods and services, [and] restrict employment opportunities." One of its recommendations is to "allow all licensed professionals to provide services to the full extent of their current competency, even if this means that multiple professions provide overlapping services." This is exactly what this legislation would accomplish, allowing Minnesota's nation-leading water conditioning industry to continue to thrive and efficiently and safely provide Minnesotans with quality water, while also maintaining the proper scope of the plumbing license.

HF 1408 O'Driscoll, Hoppe, and Atkins; SF 1689 Carlson, Metzen, Gazelka, Eken, and Sparks

For questions or more information contact Mark Haase at mahaase@gmail.com or 612-819-0738.

Find out who your Minnesota State Representative and Senator are, and get contact information, here:

<http://www.gis.leg.mn/OpenLayers/districts/>

(Send to your Minnesota House Member (Representative) and your Minnesota Senator. **Do not send to U.S. House or Senate.**)

Any questions contact Mark Haase mahaase@gmail.com or 612-819-0738.

Use the following to write an email:

Dear Representative _____ OR Senator _____,

Something about who you are and your work in water conditioning: I work/live in your district and work at _____/as a _____.

I am writing to ask you to support House File 1408/Senate File 1689. Minnesota licensing regulations allow water conditioning journeymen and masters to install water conditioning equipment in single family residences, not in any other settings. But, the water issues, treatment process, and equipment involved are no different in small commercial settings. Current training and licensing requirements make water conditioning journeymen and masters the specialists most qualified to do this work. The current limitation unnecessarily increases costs to consumers and small businesses and may hurt water safety, especially in rural areas where water treatment needs and safety concerns are the greatest.

This legislation would create a clear and more logical line for water conditioning installation. It would allow water conditioning journeymen and masters to install water conditioning equipment in small commercial settings only up to the nearest isolation valve installed by a licensed plumber. This allows the water system to always be completely and properly isolated from the installation. It would not limit the current ability of licensed plumbers to do this work as well.

Allowing water conditioning journeymen and masters to install water conditioning equipment in small businesses as well as single family homes will provide the flexibility and expertise needed to deal with Minnesota's drinking water safety issues, and allow us to efficiently and safely provide Minnesotans with quality water, while also maintaining the proper scope of the plumbing license.

Please let me know if you have any questions about this legislation. Thank you.

Sincerely,
