

North America Bathroom News

July 2008



International Market Strategy

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Canada: BRG CONSULT Canadian Bathroom Report 2008 – Now Available!

BRG CONSULT is pleased to announce the completion of its annual report on the Canadian market for bathroom products. This 227-page detailed report on the Canadian market is immediately available.

The products researched in this country report include cast iron baths, steel baths, synthetic baths, tub/shower modules, shower modules, shower trays/pans, ceramic sanitary ware products, exposed and concealed plastic cisterns, faucets, taps, and mixers, shower enclosures, shower kits, whirlpool baths, air massage baths and combined air/water jetted baths.

For each of the above product categories, sales trends are analyzed from 1996 to 2007 with detailed annual forecasts to 2012. BRG examines the total market size, market valuation in CAN \$, unit market share of the various product suppliers, average market prices, distribution flow analysis as well as country specific geographic and demographics, construction and housing markets, macro economic trends and profiles on the largest product suppliers and distributors in the country.

The USA Bathrooms Report 2008 examining the US market is completed and will be available shortly.

For more information on the Canadian and US bathrooms reports, please contact Victor Post at vpost@brggroup.com

For country market information on Latin America and the Carribean, please contact Victor Post at vpost@brggroup.com

Source: BRG CONSULT NORTH AMERICA



Canada: MAAX CORP. Agrees to Sale of Assets & Business to BROOKFIELD

Montreal, Quebec, June 12, 2008 – MAAX CORPORATION ("MAAX" or "the Company") announced today that it has entered into an Asset Purchase Agreement with BROOKFIELD BRIDGE LENDING FUND INC. ("BROOKFIELD"), its senior lender, concerning a transaction (the "Sale Transaction") that will see BROOKFIELD acquire substantially all of the assets and property of MAAX CORPORATION and its affiliates ("MAAX" or the "Company").

The Sale Transaction preserves the MAAX business and ensures its continuance as a successful competitor in the marketplace. The Sale Transaction has the following key elements:

- BROOKFIELD will purchase substantially all of the assets and property of the Company;
- BROOKFIELD will assume substantially all of the Company's trade obligations and the continued employment of substantially all of the Company's employees as set out in the Asset Purchase Agreement;
- BROOKFIELD will continue to fulfill the Company's obligations to its customers and suppliers as set out in the Asset Purchase Agreement;
- The purchase price is the amount owing under the Company's Senior Secured Credit Facility, plus the assumption by BROOKFIELD of the assumed liabilities; and
- The Sale Transaction is expected to close within 60 days. "This transaction will place the MAAX business on a much stronger financial footing that will enable it to focus on building upon its competitive position and positive reputation," said Paul Golden, the Company's President and CEO. "It preserves the MAAX business and ensures its continuance as a successful competitor in the marketplace."

The Sale Transaction will be implemented through a Court-supervised process. To that end MAAX has applied for and obtained today an Order of the Superior Court of the Province of Quebec (Commercial Division) to initiate proceedings under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act. These proceedings are limited to the Company's operations in Canada and do not apply to those in the United States or Europe. The Sale Transaction hearing has been scheduled to approve the sale of the assets and the business and a vesting order before the Superior Court of the Province of Quebec (Commercial Division) and such matter is presentable on Thursday, June 26, 2008 at 9:15 a. m. in Courtroom 16.12, 1 East, Notre-Dame Street, Montreal, Quebec.

This process will not affect the Company's day-to-day operations. MAAX has access to the funding necessary to maintain operations and the business will continue without disruption during this period. As part of the Initial CCAA Order, the Court approved an amendment to the Company's existing credit facilities with Brookfield that provide MAAX with an additional CDN \$30 million of available financing.

As part of the Sale Transaction, MAAX will continue pay its suppliers for all goods and services in the ordinary course. BROOKFIELD is assuming the co-op, rebate, warranty claim and other provisions of its current customer agreements, and the Company anticipates that these will continue to be honoured without interruption.

"Our sales in Canada remain strong," Mr. Golden added. "We have plans to continue growing our leadership position and market share in the United States, and we expect that the completion of the Sale Transaction will enable MAAX to emerge as a stronger company for the long term in North America and Europe."



About MAAX

MAAX is a leading North American manufacturer of award-winning bathroom products and spas for the residential housing market. The corporation is committed to offering its customers an enjoyable experience: distinctive, stylish, and innovative products and the best customer service practices in the industry.

The company currently employs more than 2,000 people in 15 plants and independent distribution centers throughout North America and Europe.

Source: www.maax.com

Canada: Discontinuance of MAAX SPA Division Sales Transaction

Montreal, Quebec – June 5, 2008 – Further to an announcement made by MAAX CORPORATION (the "Company") on May 28, 2008, in relation to the potential sale of a significant portion of the assets of the Company's spa division --- MAAX SPAS (Arizona) INC., the Company announced today that MAAX CORPORATION would not be proceeding with the sales transaction and entering into a definitive purchase agreement with the purchaser.

MAAX SPAS will continue to be managed under its current operating structure and the management team remains committed to delivering high quality products and services to all its stakeholders.

Source: www.maax.com



USA: FERGUSON Opens a New Clearance Center in Pomona, California

NEWPORT NEWS, VA — FERGUSON is pleased to announce the opening of a new clearance center in Pomona, Calif., that will provide customers with superior merchandise and outstanding service. The 7,600-square-foot retail space, located in our existing warehouse at 2750 S. Towne Ave., offers a great selection of high-end bath and kitchen faucet fixtures, sinks, toilets and appliances at reduced prices.

FERGUSON's warehouses and showrooms are designed with homeowners, plumbers, builders, remodelers and designers in mind and offer a vast selection of plumbing products and fixtures, including appliances and lighting from today's most recognized manufacturers. Items sold in FERGUSON's new clearance center are excess inventory and discontinued material in near perfect condition from surrounding FERGUSON warehouses and showrooms in the Southern California area.

"What sets our clearance center apart from others in the area is that we will offer high-end merchandise at deep discounts that is available to take home on the same day you buy it. We also offer home delivery, extended warranties and appliance installation services," said Manager Hilda Contreras.

Source: www.ferguson.com



USA: SLOAN Valve Becomes First 'Eco-Effective' Manufacturer

20 June 2008 - SLOAN VALVE CO. has received Cradle To Cradle Design certification for its products by MBDC, a product process and design firm that evaluates companies and their products based on their "eco-effectiveness". Two of SLOAN's plumbing products were certified for Silver-level status: the Uppercut® dual-flush Flushometer and the Royal® model 111 manual Flushometer.

"This certification is the result of 10 months of exhaustive review of our manufacturing processes and materials," announced Jim Allen, director of SLOAN's Water Efficiency Division. "MBDC's Cradle to Cradle certification process is the most thorough and rigorous third-party product evaluation. This certification goes beyond our products' water-saving attributes; it is a true assessment of the overall, combined impact of SLOAN's manufacturing, material selection, recycled/recovered material use, and all processes related to product creation."

MBDC, founded in 1995, promotes and shapes the implementation of eco-effective design principles. Instead of perpetuating cradle-to-grave products — dumped in landfills after fulfilling their initial intended purpose — MBDC's Cradle To Cradle Design concept recognizes products whose materials are continuously circulated in closed loops.

Designing for cradle-to-cradle product lifecycles plans for sustainability and product re-use, which reduces reliance on virgin material inputs and lessens overall material costs.

SLOAN offsets 100 percent of the energy used in its Franklin Park, Ill., headquarters with renewable energy, and is also the recipient of the U.S. EPA's Green Power Leadership Award for its Green Power Purchase.

Sustainability is also reflected in SLOAN's material choices: About 89 percent of a SLOAN Flushometer is made from brass casting alloy, 99 percent of which is from recycled sources, and the Flushometer is completely recyclable or reusable in remodel projects.

Source: www.supplyht.com



USA: SYMMONS Unveils New Branding Initiative

SYMMONS INDUSTRIES has a new look, new messaging and an updated, enhanced product portfolio. The company's fresh new logo and tagline reflect SYMMONS' new position as "THE SMART CHOICE" for designers, architects, contractors and consumers. This is SYMMONS' first new brand introduction since the company's inception in 1939.

To coincide with this rebranding initiative, SYMMONS has added more than 20 new products and enhancements to its existing offering. New additions to the company's premium products portfolio include the OXFORD and NARU lines, two comprehensive suites of luxurious fittings and accessories for the bath that come complete with a hand spray option for the shower.

SYMMONS has also redesigned its MAX Line thermostatic tempering device from their commercial product portfolio, a cost-effective solution for controlling water temperature and regulating flow.

SYMMONS DESIGN STUDIO recently introduced an empowering customization method called DESIGN STUDIO LIVE. This user-friendly Web-based tool makes it possible for users to participate in SYMMONS' customized design process without leaving their desks.

Source: The Wholesaler



USA: UPONOR Joins Green Mechanical Council

UPONOR has joined the Green Mechanical Council (GreenMech) as a Founding Member.

UPONOR, formally known as WIRSBO, a leading international supplier of plumbing and heating systems for residential and commercial buildings, joins several other organizations as a leading member of GreenMech, including CARRIER, NIBCO, International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO), Ferris State University, Legend Valve, Mechanical Contractors Association of America, ABCO Refrigeration, Watts Radiant, United Association (UA), Floor Heat Company, Mechanical Contracting Education & Research Foundation (MCERF), Legend Hydronics, Bacharach, Fieldpiece, HVAC Excellence, and Mechanical Services Contractors of America (MSCA).

The mission of the Green Mechanical Council is to educate contactors, field technicians, and industry leaders about creating and maintaining environmentally sound residential and commercial mechanical systems.

The goals of the Green Mechanical Council are:

- Provide specialized focus in structural mechanical systems to include plumbing, HVACR, electrical, and related systems.
- Provide recognition of our membership as leaders in energy efficiency materials, technology, design, installation and service.
- Provide education and training to enable members to maximize the efficiency of existing mechanical systems and specifying high performance replacements.
- Provide current information about people, products and processes to enable members to stay at the cutting edge of their trade.
- Provide members networking opportunities with other members and industry leaders.
- Provide educational outreach to the public to increase awareness of the benefits of energy efficient systems and the advantage of engaging our members' services.
- Provide input to Code authorities to help write effective and meaningful standards regarding mechanical systems.
- Provide a forum for members through Advisory Boards.
- Provide an effective network with similar minded organizations.

UPONOR, formally known as WIRSBO, was founded in 1620 – forging high quality steel and weapons for the king of Sweden. UPONOR is headquartered in Apple Valley Minnesota, a suburb of Minneapolis/St Paul. UPONOR has over 4,100 employees worldwide. In Europe, UPONOR is a prominent regional supplier of municipal infrastructure pipe systems. The Group's key applications are sold in over a hundred countries.

Source: www.greenmech.org



USA: Glaser Named President and CEO of BRIGGS

CHARLESTON, SC -- Rafael Errazuriz, CEO of BRIGGS' parent company CISA , announced today that Stephen Glaser has been appointed as President and CEO of BRIGGS INDUSTRIES effective July 1, 2008. Steve Glaser came to BRIGGS in 2004 as Vice-President of Operations where he led the expansion of the company's supply chain and supported key projects including the implementation of SAP. In December of 2007, Steve was appointed General Manager.

Prior to BRIGGS, Steve held positions of increasing responsibility with SONY ELECTRONICS and ELECTROLUX. Steve also served ten years in the U.S. Navy as an Engineering Officer.

Steve holds master's degrees in electrical engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School, industrial engineering from Purdue University, and a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering from Louisiana State University.

Mr. Errazuriz noted "I want to congratulate Steve for this appointment and wish him success in this role..."

BRIGGS PLUMBING PRODUCTS, INC., is a global producer of quality plumbing fixtures, with manufacturing facilities throughout the Americas. Product lines include vitreous china toilets, bidets, lavatories, bathtubs and kitchen sinks, plus the SAYCO brand of faucets.

Source: www.briggsplumbing.com



USA: Despite Weak Economy, Forecasters Predict Housing Rebound

According to a survey by the National Association for Business Economics, the worst of the painful housing slump and the credit crunch might come to an end this year. Unfortunately, the forecasters participating believe the economy will weaken further and unemployment will rise. The survey of 52 economics was conducted April 17 through May 1.

The survey noted that 56% of economics think the country is on the brink of a recession or in one already because of all the problems in housing, credit and financial markets. That is an 11% gain from a similar survey in February. However the good news is that these economists say that if there is indeed a recession, it probably will be short and shallow.

Also, they predict that growth of the economy will slow to 1.4% this year — down from the 1.8% they projected in the February survey. (Last year, the economy grew 2.2%.) On a positive note, the forecasters believe that next year, the economy will gain 2.3%.

The unemployment rate is expected to be higher than last year's 4.6% average. In fact, the survey showed that economics predict the jobless rate will hit 5.3% in 2008 and 5.6% in 2009.

When considering home sales, forecasters believe that the housing slump will hit bottom this year -- although they couldn't come to agreement as to which quarter that would occur. Home prices are likely to continuing dropping the remainder of this year and next.

"The economy is still going to be weak in the very near term, but the worst is likely to end this year with respect to the housing decline and the credit crunch," Lynn Reaser, chief economist at Bank of America's Investment Strategies Group, who participated in survey, told the Associated Press.

Among the major factors cited as being the most responsible for the spiraling economy were the housing slump, credit problems, and high energy, food and commodity prices.

Consumer prices are expected to increase 3.6% this year, up from a previous forecast of a 3% gain. Next year, the inflation rate is predicted to slow to about 2.4%.

Source: ww.thewholesaler.com



USA: 'Wild Card' in Housing Market is Recession, Builders Say

June 19, 2008 - Home-builder executives said at an industry conference Thursday that they're making progress clearing out excess inventory, but warned that a recession and spiking unemployment could stop that advance in its tracks.

"No one who's unemployed ever bought a house," said Lawrence Angelilli, senior vice president of finance at CENTEX CORP. "That's the wild card that everybody is waiting to see is if we get a true economic recession."

Job losses would only further pressure slumping housing prices, which are keeping jittery buyers on the sidelines.

"The other part about this is that everything that's happened so far has been in what was considered a relatively low interest-rate environment with historic low unemployment, so you've had this massive dislocation in the home-building space, totally independent of any economic fundamentals," Angelilli added, speaking at a home-building conference hosted by BANK OF AMERICA CORP., which was Webcast from New York. "If we introduce unemployment, that would be very significant."

Home-builder stocks staged a rally in early 2008 that has since fizzled on lingering concerns about the housing market and tougher lending standards.

Inventory Reductions

Despite worries about jobs and the economy, home-builder executives said they're reducing the backlog of new homes for sale on the market by scaling back construction, lowering prices and other measures.

"The standing inventory of new construction is declining rapidly, but it's being offset somewhat by existing homes and foreclosure," according to the CENTEX executive. Earlier this week, the Commerce Department estimated housing starts fell to a 17-year low in May.

"Right now, we're seeing new homes that are being foreclosed on and that's a challenge, but ultimately the inventory reductions in the new-home space are significant and it's encouraging, and we expect it to continue through this year," Angelilli said. Steven Hilton, chief executive at MERITAGE HOMES CORP., said there is a "disconnect" between public home-builders' inventories vs. the numbers the government reports. He estimated public home builders have inventories of about three months, on average. "We've reduced our inventory dramatically also," said Larry Nicholson, chief operating officer of RYLAND GROUP INC.

Cutting Back Construction

In particular, builders have been trying to limit the number of speculative or "spec" homes in the backlog. Spec homes are those without a buyer due to a cancellation, for instance.

"Every builder I know is working for cash these days and trying to add cash to the balance sheet, which means taking down your spec units," commented RYLAND Chief Financial Officer Gordon Milne.



Home builders have been forced to lower prices, but they could stabilize once the companies are able to burn through enough inventory and raise cash, MERITAGE's Hilton said.

During the housing downturn, home builders have been trying to achieve a delicate balance between sales volume and profit margins. Some companies such as CENTEX have adopted the strategy of sacrificing pricing to move inventory and boost cash flows. Others such as luxury builder TOLL BROTHERS INC., have decided to hold the line more on pricing.

Home builders have been trying to get their balance sheets and debt in order so they're better positioned for the eventual recovery in housing.

Foreclosures and mortgages

Still, the housing market is still facing many headwinds, according to industry executives, who are particularly concerned about new homes going into foreclosure.

"Mortgage foreclosures were never viewed as being competition for new construction," said Angelilli at CENTEX. Listen to interview on new homes fighting for attention.

"The thing that makes today so much different ... is that a lot of foreclosures are coming from nonowner-occupied borrowers who built new homes and were trying to flip them," Angelilli added. "Now you do have this first-time phenomenon of massive foreclosures that are coming through on new construction."

One big question is how motivated the lenders will be to "take the haircut" and sell the properties at a loss, he elaborated. "Where we're a little bit in uncharted territory [is] how big is that and how does that compete with new construction."

Despite a contracted mortgage market, financing is still being offered to qualified home buyers, the executive said. "If you were to turn back the clock to the year 2000, probably somebody who qualified for a mortgage in 2000 would qualify for a mortgage today. There's a substantial emphasis now on down payments and being able to handle debt service within traditional ratios, and the market has had difficulty adjusting back to the old model in terms of mortgage qualifications, but liquidity is there for qualified buyers."

MERITAGE's Hilton said that "we're back in the 1990s" in terms of mortgage finance, with no more "exotic" loans being offered.

Several executives also commented that they expect smaller and private builders to be forced out of business.

"We think there will be fewer builders at the end of the day," according to RYLAND's Nicholson. "We expect some of the privates will disappear. Funding will be an issue to them."

Source: www.marketwatch.com



USA: Four years of Gains in Home Prices Wiped Out

June 24, 2008, WASHINGTON -- Home prices across 20 major U.S. cities have dropped a record 15.3% in the past year and are now back to where they were in the summer of 2004, according to the Case-Shiller home price index released Tuesday by Standard & Poor's.

Prices in the 20 cities are now down 17.8% from the peak two years ago. Prices were lower in April than they were a year earlier in all 20 of the major metropolitan areas as tracked by the Case-Shiller index.

'There might be some regional pockets of improvement, but on an annual basis the overall numbers continue to decline.'

Las Vegas, Miami and Phoenix saw the biggest declines, with prices falling by 25% or more in the past year. Prices in 10 cities have fallen by more than 10%.

Home prices in Charlotte, N.C., which was the last holdout, have now slipped 0.1% in the past year.

Prices were down a record 16.3% on a year-over-year basis in a smaller subset of 10 metropolitan areas that have been tracked over a longer period.

With so many homes on the market and foreclosures rising, prices are likely to keep falling, said Patrick Newport, an economist with Global Insight. He foresees prices dropping a further 10%. Listen to the interview with Newport.

All the same, it's worth noting that prices for April fell 1.4% compared with March, the smallest monthly decline in seven months. "It seems that at least the pace of decline has started to lose momentum," wrote Harm Bandholz, an economist for UniCredit Markets, in a note to clients. But other economists noted that the slower pace of decline in April could be due to the seasonal trend toward higher prices in the spring; the monthly Case-Shiller data are not seasonally adjusted.

A separate index published Tuesday by the federal government showed a smaller 4.6% annual decline.

The Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight index is based on a broader geographic reach, but it's restricted to homes purchased by conforming loans and therefore doesn't capture the gains in the hottest markets where subprime loans and jumbo mortgages once dominated and where foreclosures are surging and prices are plunging.

Home prices surged in 2003 through 2006, climbing by a cumulative 52%, according to Case-Shiller. Since then, however, the housing and credit bubbles have burst and homeowners have given up half of their gains from earlier in the decade.

Falling prices have eroded Americans' wealth, cutting into their ability to borrow against the equity in their homes or refinance or sell for a profit. Millions of Americans now owe more on their homes than they're worth.

The falling home values could also trigger higher monthly payments for many homeowners with adjustable-rate loans.



But falling prices are likely a necessary ingredient if the housing market is to get growing again. "We expect the 20-city Case-Shiller composite to fall another 15% to 20%, to a bottom at the end of 2009, translating to a peak-to-trough drop of 30% to 35%," wrote Michelle Meyer, an economist for Lehman Bros.

The Case-Shiller index tracks sales of the same homes over time, so it's not influenced by the mix of homes sold in a period. Unlike the home price index from the OFHEO, the Case-Shiller gauge tracks homes with nonconforming loans, such as subprime loans or jumbo loans, which were common in the frothiest markets.

Prices in the OFHEO index were down 3.4% in the 12 months ending in March. "There might be some regional pockets of improvement, but on an annual basis the overall numbers continue to decline," says David Blitzer, chairman of the index committee at Standard & Poor's. Home prices fell in 12 of 20 cities in April compared with March. Prices have fallen in those 12 cities for eight consecutive months.

Here's the city-by-city breakdown in the Case-Shiller index:

Las Vegas, down 26.8% in the past year; Miami, down 26.7%; Phoenix, down 25%; Los Angeles, down 23.1%; San Diego, down 22.4%; San Francisco, down 22.1%; Tampa, down 20.4%; Detroit, down 18%; Minneapolis, down 15.5%; Washington, down 14.8%; Chicago, down 9.3%; New York, down 8.4%; Atlanta, down 7.5%; Cleveland, down 6.8%; Boston, down 6.4%; Seattle, down 4.9%; Denver and Portland, both down 4.7%; Dallas, down 3.4%; and Charlotte, down 0.1%.

In the OFHEO index, here's the regional breakdown:

Pacific, down 15% in the past year; Mountain, down 4.9%; South Atlantic, down 4.8%; New England, down 4.6%; East North Central, down 3.8%; Middle Atlantic, down 3.3%; West North Central, down 2.4%; East South Central, up 0.1%; West South Central, up 1.9%.

After accounting for 4.5% inflation over the past year, real home prices are down in every region.

Source: www.marketwatch.com



USA: Too-Thirsty Toilets Won't Get Water in DeKalb

Wary shoppers know all about kicking the tires on used cars and squeezing the fruit at grocery stores. But are they ready to lift the lids on toilet tanks? Home buyers in DeKalb County should get used to the idea, now that a new measure to cope with the historic drought is in effect.

Any house built before 1993 and sold beginning Sunday has to have "low-flow" toilets that swallow 1.6 gallons of water or less per flush. The volume is usually stamped on the underside of the lid that caps the water tank. Older toilets? No water service. Some prospective buyers are worried about the mandate. "This low-flow thing has been a very, very hot-button issue for all my clients in DeKalb County," said real estate agent Ryan Graham. Graham, who is with 9 Mile Trolley, said at least one client expedited closing a sale to avoid dealing with it. Other buyers want assurances they can obtain water service if they purchase an older house, he said.

The "inefficient plumbing fixtures replacement plan" requires sellers to disclose when their toilets, faucets and shower heads are not up to today's water-sipping standards. County officials picked 1993 because low-flow toilets became mandatory in new construction around that time.

DeKalb still has as many as 165,000 pre-1993 houses, but no one knows how many have been retrofitted with low-flow devices. The crackdown is part of the county's new water-conservation plan. Gov. Sonny Perdue ordered water providers to reduce consumption by 10 percent from a year earlier. Starting in January, nearly all buildings sold in DeKalb — not only houses — will have to comply with the low-flow mandate.

The county law says new owners of old homes who apply for water service must attach a certificate confirming the house is outfitted with water-saving toilets and fixtures. A licensed plumber, home inspector or an inspector from the DeKalb Department of Watershed Management can provide the certificate.

The toilet mandate should mean work for plumbers. So far, demand hasn't surged, said Ted Zurn, the president of the Plumbing and Mechanical Association of Georgia. A friend selling a house asked for a deal on three toilets, the Chamblee plumber said, adding that he would have forgotten about the mandate otherwise. "I haven't noticed any bump in our business yet because of it."

The DeKalb Association of Realtors opposed the requirement, concerned about the effect it would have on clients. Graham, the real estate agent, said he's been warning his clients about it — and recommending to sellers that they get the installation.

Graham said there is a lot of confusion and uncertainty. For instance, one of his clients made a purchase contingent on the seller completing installation. But when Graham sought assurance from the county that the work was adequate and water service would be provided after the property changed hands, he said he got no clear response. "We're not getting the warm and fuzzy reassurances from the county at this point," he said.

The county has a copy of the new law on its website, at www.dekalbwatershed.com.

Source: The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



USA: How Much Water Do You Need To Flush?

20 May 2008 - As plumbing products continue to become more water-efficient, including 1.0 gallon-per-flush water closets and urinals utilizing only one pint of water to flush, there's greater interest in low-consumption fixtures. The American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) is expected to soon bring more clarity to some of these low-consumption flushing terms by defining them in applicable standards.

John Watson, director of technical services for plumbing manufacturer SLOAN VALVE COMPANY and a member of the ASME A112.19.2 Working Group, says that no "official" definition has yet emerged in an approved consensus standard for High-Efficiency Urinals (HEU) and High-Efficiency Toilets (HET).

ASME will, however, likely provide those definitions when it next updates the ASME A.112.19.2 standard. For now, HEUs and HETs can be defined as follows:

An HEU is a urinal that performs to the current ASME A.112.19.2 performance standards while using no more than 0.5 gpf/1.9 Lpf to flush. This is a reduction from the current standard of 1.0 gpf/3.8 Lpf as required by the Energy Policy Act of 1992. By this definition, waterfree urinals are categorized as HEUs.

An HET is a water closet that meets the current performance requirements outlined in ASME A.112.19.2 but does so by either flushing at a maximum of 1.28 gpf/4.8 Lpf or by deploying a dual-flush device, which based on a typical 2:1 liquid/solid use ratio, averages a total flush volume of 1.28 gpf while achieving a MaP test score of removing at least 350 grams of waste.

"Dual-flush Flushometers are rising in popularity," says Watson, "partly because they easily meet HET performance standards." In smaller buildings, Watson explains, it may be more advantageous to install manual dual-flush Flushometers in restrooms, because they have a regular set of users. "These users are more familiar with and conscientious about the facility, which means they are more likely to learn how to manually operate a dual-flush Flushometer to its full potential," he says.

But restrooms frequented by newcomers can certainly benefit from manual dual-flush Flushometers as well. SLOAN includes signage with its UPPERCUT® dual-flush Flushometers, which can be affixed near the flush valve to quickly educate users on its usage and benefits. Proper operation by even a fraction of the users can equate to significant water savings. Plus, as dual-flush flush valves become more common, restroom users will just intuitively know how to operate them - much in the same way they learned to adapt to sensor-operated Flushometers when they first emerged on the market.

Large commercial or institutional buildings with a transient population or restrooms in high-traffic areas such as airports, entertainment venues, and shopping malls may gain greater efficiencies from automatic operation. "For these restrooms, it makes sense to install the new electronic dual-flush Flushometers, which automatically initiate the appropriate flush cycle, depending on the amount of time the user remains in the sensor range," says Watson.

Source: www.todaysfacilitymanager.com



USA: EPA Announces WaterSense Urinal Draft

01 June 2008 - WASHINGTON – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has announced its Notice of Intent to develop a draft performance standards for high-efficiency urinals.

EPA noted that there are currently an estimated 12 million urinals in the U.S. Up to 80% or 9.6 million of these urinals are inefficient units with flush volumes exceeding the current 1.0 gallon per flush maximum flush volume allowed by federal standards by a half gallon to as much as 4.5-GPF. Since the federal standards were enacted, manufacturers have developed even more efficient urinals that use significantly less water than the standard 1.0 gpf fixtures or no water at all. These new fixtures can save an additional 0.5 gallon to 1-GPF compared to standard fixtures, resulting in a savings of between 2,300 and 4,600 gallons per urinal per year. Replacing older, inefficient urinals with these new fixtures can save even more water.

In 2004, the California Urban Water Conservation Council, in conjunction with a select group of its water provider members, developed a definition for HEUs that has become widely recognized and accepted as the plumbing industry standard. An HEU is now defined as a urinal fixture with a flush volume of 0.5-GPF or less, including non-water urinals.

The agency said that some technical points require further consideration and assessment before draft specifications can be published. To better define the major criteria and establish appropriate levels that ensure increased water efficiency and a high level of performance, WaterSense is requesting supporting information and data from all interested parties, including manufacturers, researchers, water utilities and water-efficiency organizations.

Source: www.contractormag.com

Australia: Python Found in Toilet

20 June 2008, CANBERRA - A 1.8 meter (nearly six feet) python has been found in a toilet bowl in a highrise apartment in Australia's northern tropical city of Darwin, media reported on Friday.

The Northern Territory News said the black-headed python was found in a 10th floor toilet.

Reptile catcher Chris Peberdy told the newspaper the python, likely to be a runaway pet, had been traveling through the building's sewer pipes.

"When I saw it I was pretty shocked," he said. "There is no possible other way it could have got there than through the toilet. I had to give him a wash because he was wet and a bit smelly."

Source: Reuters