# Ripple Effect<sup>tm</sup> The Voice of Plumbing Manufacturers International

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# Facing a New Normal, PMI Members Respond to the Moment

By Joel Smith, PMI Board of Directors President, Kohler Co.



Joel Smith

In my March column, I extolled the virtues of our long Wisconsin winters. I wrote of the joy of an unexpected snowstorm that keeps us holed up in our homes and provides solitary time for focus and planning. As I read back over that column recently, I couldn't help but chuckle and think to myself, "If I had only known then what I know now." How the past two months have forever

changed my perspective on being stuck at home.

Yes, we need time alone, but we also need time with others – many others. And this is coming from someone whose Myers-Briggs profile starts with "I" – for introversion. We need time spent face to face, not just time speaking on the phone or collaborating virtually. The past two month have taught me a lot about the joy and meaning in sitting across the table from someone.

The internet has enabled us to collaborate in ways we never imagined before, but we've also realized the shortcomings of electronic communication. Something is different when you're in person. There's no lag, not even the few dozen milliseconds, that can make electronic communication stunted and awkward. Body language is clear and complete. Even the distractions we experience during an in-person meeting are not individual but shared.

I can say with certainty that we've all been changed by the events of the last few months. They have taught me more than ever the simple joys in life: spending time together with friends, shopping leisurely, strolling through a park, eating at a favorite restaurant.

As I sit at my computer writing, it can be hard to believe that things will be normal again. But they will be. No matter how great the calamity we've faced in our nation's history, there has always been a normal that followed it. The new normal will be different than the old normal but hopefully those changes will be for the better. However the future is different I'm sure we'll appreciate the small things more. We'll appreciate being together. We'll have a bit more resilience and a bit more humility, as well.

# **PMI** members respond in resourceful, ingenious and caring ways

In this issue of Ripple Effect, you will read inspiring examples of how PMI members have responded to the COVID-19 crisis in ways that give me faith in America's resourcefulness, ingenuity, and care for each other. If your company is not mentioned this issue, send us your stories for the June issue.

Classified as essential critical infrastructure workplaces, our members' production facilities can remain open, as plant managers carefully follow federal, state and local guidelines to protect the health of employees. Members are regularly checking workers' temperatures, adding shifts to reduce the number of employees within a facility at any given time, keeping workers safe distances away from each other, implementing sanitizing protocols, and providing gloves, masks and other protective gear to workers.

Working from home, of course, has become the best option for those of us who are able to do so. Within this new digital work environment, members have been organizing fun activities to keep morale high, such as scheduling daily digital "coffee breaks" to discuss good books and TV shows, show off their pets, and the like.

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# The Desire to Thrive Will Carry Us

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

"The future

always comes too

fast and in the

wrong order"-

**Alvin Toffler** 

With so many

things out of

your control, how do you

do the things



Kerry Stackpole

that will connect your company to the future? How do you push forward in the midst of a global humanitarian crisis that shows no clear signs of abatement? In the absence of full-scale testing, how will the medical professionals know who requires isolation or treatment, and who should be allowed re-entry into the workforce?

In so many ways, plumbing product manufacturers and leaders are well positioned to grab the helm in this situation and bring about impactful change. As an industry, we revel in the unknown. We imagine. We instigate. We innovate. We engineer. We develop. We deliver. And we do it all without the benefit of an illustrated playbook at hand. Our instincts, our passion, and our commitment to safe, responsible plumbing drive us beyond the boundaries of what seems possible and thrusts us deep into the future.

Prognosticators and futurists are all hard at work imaging the future of manufacturing in a post-COVID-19 world. The words noted businessman and futurist Alvin Toffler wrote fifty years ago in "Future Shock" are richly present in today's environment. What happens when people and organizations are overwhelmed by change? Toffler correctly identified trends such as the explosion of the consumer marketplace. "Overchoice" would become the natural result of consumers rejecting standardized products in their increasing search and focus on individuality. Toffler pointed out that "the illiterate of the

21st century would not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."

Part of that effort to relearn requires leaders and companies to move past their reliance on fragile systems and take back control of their critical structures. The COVID-19 pandemic is a showcase for the shortcomings of today's global supply chain. Ted Mabrey, writing for the Palantir blog noted, "We have to assertively wield the systems to make them work for us and not the opposite. This means relearning how to make those decisions we have outsourced to systems. We will certainly get some of them wrong. But successes around the world show that decisions we make with real visibility and live information will be far better than decisions outsourced to an automaton configured for a world we no longer recognize."

The accelerated use of technology both pre- and post-COVID-19, enabling so many to work from home, will bring Toffler's "electronic cottages" vision to life and allow people a greater work-life balance and a richer family life. Undoubtedly, the accelerated use of collaborative tools will have real impact for online learning, working and convening. There is a sense among some future thinkers that the digital

divide between manufacturers with a current robust digital infrastructure and those manufacturers without may likely create a competitive chasm difficult to overcome. The growth in the use of IoT, AI, collaboration, and remote diagnostic tools will only continue to accelerate. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed manufacturing leaders to greater levels of resiliency and required new operational flexibilities. Will these new resilient models enable you to capture market opportunities on the other side of the current crisis? As the humorist Will Rogers once pointed out, "even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."

Few of us imagined 2020 as the decade of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, here we are. It can be difficult to imagine the future when you are in the midst of a crisis. Yet, that is an essential leadership skill. Looking at the larger patterns, exploring new concepts and re-examining old ones while sensing signals across industries and marketplaces allow you to create coherent frameworks for tackling today's complex problems. From these frameworks emerge fuel for the foresight and future-looking vision essential to inspire our teams in these turbulent times.

Optimism is a force multiplier. Use it wisely.



# **PMI Members Fortify Worker Safety Amid COVID-19 Crisis**

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

Plumbing manufacturers continue to support the country during the COVID-19 crisis, creating many crucial products, such as faucets, toilets and emergency showers needed by first responders. Identified as essential by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), plumbing manufacturing workers are producing these products while heeding protective measures outlined by federal, state and local guidelines to keep their workers as healthy and safe as possible.

The crisis and resulting changes have shined a light on a new reality for plumbing manufacturers. In response to surveys issued by PMI about the coronavirus' impact, several PMI members say that doing business in the age of COVID-19 has proven challenging. However, they remain committed to worker safety while serving the critical plumbing products needs of residential, commercial and not-for-profit customers, including hospitals, nursing homes, food production facilities, military bases, and other essential workplaces.

For example, PMI member Reliance Worldwide Corporation (RWC) said it has put together a COVID-19 response task force with the top priority of protecting the health and safety of employees, customers and suppliers, according to an RWC COVID-19 update on the company's website (tinyurl.com/y7kmzu5n). RWC has made changes to its operating procedures at all plants and distribution centers to lessen potential exposure to coronavirus, such as requiring employees to work from home and restricting travel. In addition, RWC – along with PMI members including Sloan Valve Company and Moen Incorporated – say they are taking workers' temperatures to help minimize the virus' spread.

"If we do have to venture into the office, we have to abide by social distancing guidelines, and also check our temperature before going in," said **John Bertrand**, manager – compliance, Moen. "We've really embraced online conferencing for everything." The office and plants have launched advanced cleaning measures and offer personal protective equipment in many locations throughout the buildings, he added.

PMI member Duravit posted a COVID-19 update on its website (<u>tinyurl.com/y9b7tceb</u>), calling attention to a new safety policy of requiring warehouse employees to work in two shifts to isolate receiving and shipping departments, and rotating days for management to work in the company office vs. their home offices.

Fisher Manufacturing, another PMI member, shared details of its response to COVID-19 on the company's website

(tinyurl.com/ y9vxd7o9), explaining the importance of employee safety. "We have instructed any employee who feels sick to not come into work. We are following the latest guidance from local, state and federal health officials,



including the CDC recommendations on sanitation practices," the update stated.

PMI members created these COVID-19 policies by working within public health guidelines established by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The bottom line for all PMI members during, and after, this crisis remains safety first – for workers, customers and suppliers helping to produce and distribute essential plumbing products – and the public, as they use those products.

Read additional PMI member COVID-19 policies and updates:

- CSA Group (<u>tinyurl.com/ycq2b6v5</u>)
- IAPMO (<u>tinyurl.com/ybnarhdo</u>)
- ICC Evaluation Service (<u>tinyurl.com/y79lgqew</u>)
- NSF International (<u>tinyurl.com/y8tx6vd6</u>)
- Pfister Faucets (<u>tinyurl.com/ybysuos3</u>)
- T&S Brass and Bronze Works, Inc. (tinyurl.com/y9fs9atp)

If your company has COVID-19 safety information that you'd like to see mentioned in a future issue of Ripple Effect, send the information to **Jodi Stuhrberg**, PMI association manager, jstuhrberg@safeplumbing.org.



Current title and employer: Vice President, Engineering, LIXIL International; PMI Board of Directors member.

Length of time in the plumbing manufacturing industry: 12 years.

My proudest plumbing manufacturing career achievement: The creation and launch of our Vormax toilet platform, developed over a two-year time period. It was a great learning experience. We started with the consumer insight - people want to improve the cleanliness of their toilet bowl. We knew we did not want to give up any of our other high-performance parameters to allow for the increased rim wash, so we needed to get creative. We figured out how to get more water to the rim to keep the toilet bowl clean by using two flush valves to feed both the rim and the jet. The project team was very collaborative, and we all learned from our mistakes. While the product launch was not flawless, consumers offered positive feedback. I love reading reviews where consumers state it is the best toilet they have ever owned.

# I started a career in the plumbing manufacturing industry because: I

received my degree in ceramic engineering from Alfred University in western New York. My friends at the time – who had never heard of ceramic engineering – told me I was going to end up making toilets, since they are made from ceramic. I denied it, but here I am. I started my career in the glass industry in North Carolina, making flat glass, and then moved onto making glass tubing for a company in south Jersey. We wanted to move back to north Jersey to be closer to family, and I was hired as a project manager at American Standard.

What is your current role in PMI? What do you hope to accomplish in this role? I am currently a member of the PMI Board of Directors and in that role, I hope to provide actionable input that continues making PMI a strong organization. Each board member brings a unique perspective, which collectively makes for a healthier organization, and I plan to do my part.

### I promote PMI within my company

**by:** At LIXIL we work to stay on top of industry changes within codes, standards and regulations. As I share information produced and distributed by PMI, I point out the value PMI brings to our organization for keeping us informed on important issues that impact our industry.

# Our PMI membership delivers the following benefits to my company:

The most immediate benefits are the Tech Talk and government affairs calls because both provide early warnings for our business to be prepared for potential change. We often find out about new laws and regulations from PMI first. PMI helps us put a rational spin on legislation, like lower flow rates and the logistical issues involved, and is our industry's voice to ensure we have enough time to deal with the issues. Also valuable is the network of experts we meet through PMI and the things we learn through interactions with them. PMI has done a good job of raising awareness about the lack of skilled labor in our industry, which is an issue our company focuses on through our TradeUp initiative.

### Best career advice I ever received:

One of my former managers taught me to know your audience when presenting or discussing information. Try to anticipate the questions they will ask or concerns they will have. He had this superpower of always knowing the one question that you hoped would not be asked and then he would ask it. I've learned that there is no substitute for being prepared.

**I'm currently reading:** "American Gods," by **Neil Gaiman**.

# My favor-

ite movie: "Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby." I love movies that make me laugh, and I will always remember seeing this



Sal Gattone

movie in the theater. I laughed so hard, I thought I would pass out!

When I face a challenge: I try to take a step back and look at it with a calm, rational mind. I find that most things are not as much of an emergency as they initially seem to be. Take a step back, lay out a plan to tackle the issue with a core team of people and work on implementing the plan. Then, adjust as you go to changing conditions.

In my spare time: I enjoy staying active. I am not very good at staying idle, so I exercise often – riding my bike, running or going to the gym.

# PMI Changes June 2020 Event Dates



PMI has changed the dates of both the 2020 Washington DC Legislative Forum and Fly-In and 2020 PMI CEO Thinking Forum. The legislative forum will be a virtual event held on June 24, 2020, with details to come. The CEO forum is postponed until April 20-21, 2021.

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

Combining its commitment to making a difference and unique expertise in risk evaluation and product certification, PMI member UL has been doing its part to help during the COVID-19 crisis. The company has been providing funding and other support to employees who want to chip in while offering free services and tools to aid companies that produce critical products, such as ventilators and hand sanitizers.

With the crisis causing supply chain disruptions and increased demand for life-saving equipment and disinfectants, many companies, suppliers and retailers need assistance with delivering those products quickly. UL has been helping by providing free access to self-service safety data sheets (SDS) (tinyurl.com/ya3lpm84). Customers can use the automated authoring tool (ULGHS.com) to create two free SDS before May 15, 2020.

To meet high demand for hand sanitizer during the crisis, many businesses, such as distilleries, are manufacturing the product for the first time. Producing and shipping these products requires an SDS – and the expertise to create it properly. UL offers a free SDS for the ethanol-based and isopropanol-based hand sanitizers (<u>tinyurl.com/yaytdu64</u>) that comply with both World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations and Federal Drug Administration (FDA) requirements. More life-saving medical devices, such as ventilators, will be required as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. UL's free webinar on "How to Submit an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) Request to Manufacture Critically Needed Medical Devices" can help manufacturers deliver these products quickly to market. It covers important topics, including clinical documentation, applicable standards and certifications, and cybersecurity.

Manufacturers and companies have been intensifying efforts to keep workers healthy and safe during this crisis. UL's three free courses (tinyurl.com/yafw2yfz) – covering infection control with handwashing, an overview of coronavirus disease, and COVID-19 and influenza – can help them prepare.

UL also has pledged support to its employees as they help provide aid to frontline workers and those in the community needing assistance. UL pays for volunteer time off for workers participating in virtual volunteer and activities related to COVID-19 relief efforts.

Employees have been stepping up in many ways including sewing masks and making protective shields for frontline workers. In addition, UL matches employee donations, up to \$50 per employee, to nonprofits supporting relief efforts involving the coronavirus crisis.

# **May Special Events Celebrate Dedication of Nurses**

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

"Nursing is an art: and if it is to be made an art, it requires an exclusive devotion as hard a preparation as any painter's or sculptor's work" - *Florence Nightingale*, the mother of modern nursing

There's no doubt that everyone is grateful for the devotion and artistry our nurses and other healthcare workers have displayed as they battle on the frontlines of the coronavirus pandemic. In May, we all have an opportunity to show them extra support by celebrating their life-saving efforts during National Nurses Week, May 6-12, and on International Nurses Day, May 12.

As the largest profession related to safeguarding the public's health globally, nurses have been in the spotlight as they care for hundreds of thousands of COVID-19 patients. We all understand that one of the best ways to support nurses and all healthcare workers is to stay healthy by practicing social distancing, safe workplace guidelines and frequent handwashing.

In 1859, Nightingale noted that "Every nurse ought to wash her hands very frequently." She would likely be impressed with today's advanced hand hygiene practices and equipment, such as touchless faucets and soap dispensers available to nurses, doctors, other healthcare workers and the public. PMI members have been innovative in developing toilets and faucets focused on good hand hygiene, making them hands-free, sensor-operated and with pre-set timers. With the 200th anniversary of Nightingale's birth falling on May 12, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) has designated 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and Midwife. Often the only healthcare providers in their communities, nurses and midwives are needed more than ever, according to the WHO. It estimates that 9 million additional nurses and midwives are necessary to gain universal health coverage worldwide by 2030.

PMI members and the public can celebrate nurses in many ways. The WHO provides materials for the public and companies to use and share on social media (<u>tinyurl.com/ybkayzt4</u>).

You can also recognize nursing contributions by writing nurses notes of appreciation or providing them free meals.

# **Bradley Survey: COVID-19 Improves U.S. Hand Washing Habits**

The coronavirus crisis has compelled Americans to significantly improve their hand hygiene habits, say the results of Bradley Corporation's 2020 Healthy Hand Washing Survey (<u>tinyurl.com/</u> <u>ydd8z97p</u>), which the PMI member company has been doing annually for the past 11 years.

A current barometer of America's awareness of infection control, the 2020 survey also shows that most Americans plan to continue frequent hand washing after the crisis is over.

Evaluating the virus' impact on Americans' hand hygiene habits, the survey revealed that 90% of U.S. citizens said they are washing their hands frequently or thoroughly compared to only 37% who said they were doing so before COVID-19. In addition, 78% revealed that they are washing their hands six or more times per day with 20% of those Americans reporting they are washing 16 or more times a day.

Survey respondents said they're washing their hands for longer periods, too. Following CDC recommendations,

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77% are washing for at least 20 seconds or longer. Before the crisis, most said they were not washing their hands long enough; 57% estimated they washed for just five to 15 seconds. After the pandemic ends, 88% of Americans believe they will continue their new hand washing routines.

Awareness of germs has shot up as well – with 89% of Americans now more mindful of them than before the pandemic. The majority of survey

# Facing a New Normal (Contd.)

## Continued from page 1

Some PMI members have extra efforts to provide support during the pandemic through activities such as providing onsite COVID-19 testing and free meals to employees, matching employee donations to organizations involved in the fight against COVID-19, making wellness check phone calls to senior citizens, promoting the importance of hand washing and other safety precautions, and donating meals or providing equipment to frontline workers.

PMI members also have used their manufacturing and certification expertise to make contributions such as creating personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers, assisting in making sure that ventilators manufactured by the auto industry meet medical device safety standards, helping distilleries produce alcohol-based sanitizer to medical professionals, facilitating submissions to the FDA to fight the virus, and providing guidance to owners of temporarily shuttered facilities on Legionella prevention.

Read more detail about these PMI member activities in this issue. And let's hope that in a month from now, the pandemic is controlled to the point where we can start beginning to see each other in person again. respondents are in favor of touchless fixtures in public restrooms; 91% said those fixtures are extremely or somewhat important. Many are anxious about contracting the coronavirus as 70% reported they are extremely or very concerned about it.

Conducted online April 6-7, the Healthy Hand Washing Survey polled 1,111 American adults and youth from around the country with responses split between men and women at 49% and 51%, respectively.

"During these unprecedented times, hand washing and germ avoidance is top of mind for almost everyone," said **Jon Dommisse**, director of strategy and corporate development for Bradley Corp., in a news release. "The health benefits of hand washing can't be emphasized enough, particularly during virus outbreaks like this. Hand washing is a simple, effective and inexpensive way to remove germs from our skin and help prevent a possible infection."

The 2020 survey follows Bradley's December 2019 Healthy Hand Washing Survey (tinyurl.com/ya6gmyy5), an annual poll of adults about their hand washing habits in public restrooms and concerns about germs, colds and the flu.

# Kohler Loans Shower Trailer to Help NY COVID-19 Workers

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

Harnessing its bath products expertise – and penchant for good deeds – PMI member Kohler Co. recently delivered respite to frontline healthcare workers battling COVID-19 in New York with its 42-foot Relief Showering Trailer.

Stationed at the Javits Center, a convention site in Manhattan currently operating as a 1,200-bed temporary field hospital, the trailer is providing showers and other amenities to hundreds of healthcare workers and volunteers. The KOHLER Relief Showering Trailer comes equipped with seven shower stalls, a changing room, and equipment room with washer and dryer for laundry. It also comes furnished with sinks



# T&S Brass Thanks Frontline Workers For All They Do

A group of T&S Brass employees expressed their gratitude to frontline healthcare workers, police officers and fire and EMS personnel protecting our health and safety. Along with their well wishes to these hard-working heroes, the T&S Brass employees brought along pizza and a signed poster.



and faucets, charging outlets for mobile devices, and flat-panel televisions.

"We deeply appreciate the remarkable efforts of health care workers and volunteers and their heroic efforts each day caring for patients, especially during this unprecedented pandemic," said **Cindy Howley**, senior manager, Kohler Stewardship, in a news release. "It is a privilege to provide some relief during these very challenging times."

To provide a safe experience for everyone using the trailer, Kohler is working closely with Javits Center personnel and security to keep it properly cleaned, sanitized and maintained.

Kohler also worked with humanitarian organization Operation Blessing International and Bennett International Group to move the trailer from South Carolina to New York.

The trailer was developed out of Kohler's Innovation for Good initiative, a program designed to develop new business opportunities that have a social purpose aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The trailer is used to support relief workers in disaster zones and was first deployed to help in North Carolina in September 2018 after Hurricane Florence struck there. Since then, the trailer has provided 3,000 showers to relief volunteers across the U.S., including in Florida and those fighting wildfires in California. Learn more about Kohler's relief efforts on the company's website (kohlercompany.com).

# NSF Uses Safety Expertise to Help During COVID-19 Crisis

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

NSF International has joined a growing list of PMI members using their know-how and resources to lend a helping hand during the COVID-19 crisis. As a public health and safety organization with certification expertise, NSF has been able to assist in many ways – from helping manufacturers quickly switch from producing autos to manufacturing crucial medical supplies to helping building owners minimize water quality risks in reduced-use buildings.

As hospitals seek additional ventilators to treat COVID-19 patients, many non-medical equipment manufacturers have changed over their production facilities to provide support. NSF has been working with automotive manufacturers to ensure their ventilators meet strict safety standards for medical devices. NSF International's health sciences team has been doing similar work in the United Kingdom to help the National Health Service increase its ventilator supply from 5,000 to 20,000, according to an NSF news release (tinyurl.com/y7vf3gky).

To help with the emergency treatment of critically ill COVID-19 patients, NSF fulfilled many rush submissions to the Federal Drug Administration (FDA). One of those submissions, made through NSF company Amarex Clinical Research LLC, included requesting emergency use of Leronlimab, an investigational drug being tested for HIV infection that could work on COVID-19 patients, states an NSF news release (tinyurl. com/y6wse4nz). Another rush submission requested using an in vitro diagnostic product to rapidly detect coronavirus.

The need for hand sanitizers also has ramped up during the crisis. CDC guidelines suggest the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers as part of a regimen also including soap and water to reduce germs on healthcare providers' hands. NSF has provided COVID-19 guidance to several distilleries so they can quickly produce and deliver hand sanitizer to medical professionals across the United States.

With many buildings required to be temporarily shuttered throughout the pandemic, the risk of Legionella caused by no-flow or stagnant water has become an issue on our industry's radar. NSF has provided guidance to building owners and managers through published articles, including this one (tinyurl.com/ydgatrak), discussing the importance of a strong water safety plan. In addition, NSF supports the American Water Works Association's Premise Plumbing Committee and other key groups developing practical guidance for managing building water systems affected by low water use because of COVID-19.

NSF has taken several steps to help educate the public on other safety issues during the crisis, including creating a website that encourages kids to practice good hand hygiene (<u>scrubclub.org</u>) and offering consumers tips on stay-at-home food safety (<u>tinyurl.com/y8vvzgvm</u>).



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