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**MESSAGE TO
ALL MEMBERS**



WPC Position Paper – The Plumbing Profession

The Increasing Importance of the Plumbing Profession

The World Health Organization has declared plumbers the most important front line health workers around the globe. Most people know from seeing the basins, taps and toilets that of what they are seeing, much of the work is behind the scenes. This “hidden” work meets the essential requirements of our daily lives especially when living in close communities.

Among the objectives upon which the World Plumbing Council was founded is promoting awareness of the plumbing industry’s role in protecting the environment by providing safe, fresh water and sanitation through proper management, care, reuse and conservation of natural resources. The industry also plays a major role in the installation of technologies that address concerns about the depletion of fossil fuels and work toward reducing harmful emissions.

Fresh water is in finite supply on Earth and as the key to life is, without question, our planet’s most precious natural resource. The plumbing industry recognizes the tenuous balance mankind must maintain to guarantee its very existence and embraces efforts to ensure we are preserving every drop possible.

Many of these efforts are well publicized and countless others go largely unnoticed. Part of the reason for establishing 11 March as World Plumbing Day is to educate the general public about the work the plumbing industry performs every day to conserve the world’s increasingly overstretched sources of drinking water and promote energy efficiency and the increased use of renewable sources of energy.

The professional plumbing industry is poised to make significant contributions to all aspects of water conservation and water reuse. This skill set already exists and can be enhanced through additional training of the young professionals. But a different paradigm must be enacted to include these valuable resources in the solution.

- [Alter historical approaches to water expansion with new strategy comprised of an integration of conservation and reuse](#)

If we do not alter our historical approaches to water supply expansion, we will only be able to provide a fraction of the world's water demand in the next few decades. By 2050, the world population is estimated to increase by 3 billion people, with 100 percent of this growth expected to be concentrated in urban areas. Within 20 years, the projected demand for water will increase between 40 and 50 percent. Although it was universally agreed that the water challenges ahead of us are daunting, the good news is it is not insurmountable.

- [Conservation and reuse must be done thru a combination of centralized and de-centralized approaches](#)

The strategy must integrate water/wastewater conveyance, water and wastewater treatment, river and surface water cleanup, wastewater and gray water reuse, rainwater harvesting, desalination, and climate change adaptation. With 100 percent of the world population growth occurring in urban areas in the next 30 years, most of the focus was on needed changes to urban water management. The key component of this strategy is to minimize consumption while maximizing recovery through a move toward a hybrid approach of conservation and a combination of centralized and decentralized water reclamation and reuse. The concept applies to all urban areas whether they are rapidly developing cities in Asia or fully developed urban systems in North America.

- [Plumbing industry largely responsible for the advancing de-centralized conservation and water reuse.](#)

Governing bodies around the world need to make the tough decisions, recognize change is needed, adjust water rates to match real overall costs, implement policies, and inspire the populace to work cooperatively toward solutions. There is enough water to go around and the water technology needed to accomplish our demand goals is already available, proven and widely accessible. The biggest obstacle we have in front of us is the lack of recognition that change is needed. A sustainable water supply is only achievable if all stakeholders in the water loop, including the plumbing industry, are working together.

The plumbing industry will play an essential role in helping stakeholders understand the importance of implementing a key component of the integrated strategy. There will be a need to accelerate the development and installation of high efficiency plumbing systems and components, and standardize the use of decentralized (onsite) alternate water sources, such as rainwater and gray water, in order to offset the need to expand water generation and transportation systems. Onsite alternate water sources offer very high volume potential, even in the most arid regions of the world, while requiring less energy and infrastructure to treat and put to beneficial use.

Along with expanding the water supply to meet demands of the growing world population, there will be a need to increase electricity and food production as well. Water, energy and food production are interconnected. Power generation and agriculture are two of the top consumers of water. Substantial power is used to treat, transport and heat water. The world's agriculture depends on phosphorus and nitrogen — the earth's supply is rapidly dwindling — and wastewater contains large quantities of these minerals. Creating an urban water cycle that uses less water and energy, while assisting in generating electricity and food, is a triple win and inevitable. To be successful, traditional plumbing fixture and system designs may need to be altered to separate fecal, urine and gray water waste streams at the source to allow municipal wastewater plants to treat waste and extract resources with fewer chemicals, and less electricity and expense.

- [Competent plumbing professionals are needed now more than ever to design, install and maintain sustainable plumbing systems due to the increased risk to public health and safety and systemic implications of water conserving products.](#)

The aim of plumbing systems is to collect, transport and distribute water and to remove liquid and human waste. The benefits of a safe water supply and proper sanitation come with risks that include water contamination, cross connections, scalding and thermal shock. The plumber is charged with ensuring the plumbing system is safely installed while mitigating the risks. Increasing population and urbanisation can amplify each of these risks due to the expanded use of alternate non-potable water sources, increased system complexity and the need for more frequent maintenance and repair. As such, the plumber's role as the most important front line health and environmental worker around the globe becomes even more critical.

Any comments or feedback on the above document would be appreciated.

Applications Close July 31, 2014 for the World Plumbing Council Scholarship Program offering up to US\$10,000.00

The WPC Scholarship program provides the opportunity to live and work within the culture of another country, providing the chance to learn another language and develop friendships. Successful applicants are encouraged to focus on the following areas during their scholarship program;

- Identification of emerging vocational training needs and trends
- Plumbing training & education to address the environment and sustainability issues
- The value of water efficiency to the community and the plumbing industry
- How does plumbing training or lack of training affect public health in a country or region?

Applications close on the 31st July 2014, application forms are attached for scholarship programmes.

All Member organisations are asked to circulate these details, plus the attached application package to all plumbing organisations in your respective countries and to publish in your respective industry journals. Thank you.

Best wishes



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