

Some frequently asked questions about the new Federal Law pertaining to no lead brass alloys.

From: Gary Bryant, the Ford Meter Box Company, Inc.

Date: March 31, 2011

We acknowledge that for many years there has been a great deal of confusion and debate surrounding the use of lead in waterworks brass, but recent Federal Legislation has brought an end to this debate for our industry. By sharing some frequently asked questions we've had addressed to us recently, hopefully, we'll provide you some insight to the forthcoming changes.

What does the new law change? In simple terms, the *Reduction of Lead in Drinking Water Act* legislation amended the Safe Drinking Water Act to reduce the allowable lead content in brass products from 8.0% to 0.25% (weighted average).

When does the new law take effect? Earlier this year the President signed into law Senate Bill 3874 with a timeline of three years to implement, making the new law effective: **January 4, 2014.**

What products are affected? The new law applies to (the wetted surfaces of) any product used in a potable (drinking) water system.

For this discussion, and from this point forward, we are only speaking to the forthcoming changes to water service brass fittings and valves manufactured by the Ford Meter Box Company.

Will there be a new AWWA standard published? It would be logical to assume that the current AWWA C800 standard will be updated to conform to the new law, but until that happens, the Federal Law is very clear and should be your primary concern.

What about the changes to the NSF standards I've heard are expected in 2012? (National Sanitation Foundation) NSF 61 is a voluntary standard currently specified in a number of markets. NSF/ANSI Standard 61 is the standard that pertains to wide variety of products used in the waterworks industry. *Once again, for this discussion, we are focusing on brass waterworks service line fittings and valves.* In response to the California and Vermont no lead laws enacted in 2010, a new standard (**NSF 372**) was created specifically in response to those new state laws mandating brass alloys with no more than 0.25% lead content, same as the new Federal Law requires. **NSF/ANSI 372 will become our primary focus as we move forward.**

Why do I hear so many different acronyms when people refer to the new alloys? *No Lead, Low Lead, Lead Free, Federalloy, EnviroBrass, etc.* Basically, everyone is talking about the same thing... Different manufacturers adopted the industry "buzz words" used in their respective market segments. We do anticipate future standards and specifications to clarify some of this industry jargon, as well as the variety of product labeling that exist today. But once again, the new Federal Law carries the most weight for the Ford Meter Box Company by specifically defining the allowable lead content (0.25%) of our brass products in 2014.

What should be my concerns before the new national lead-free law takes effect? *Inventory, inventory, inventory!* Manufacturers, distributors, contractors, and water utilities all have existing inventory that must be depleted. There is no magic process that allows brass products containing lead to be recycled into a lead free alloy product. Our most successful California customers were proactive and implemented a business plan to purge inventory ahead of their new state law's effective date. This challenge will become all the more difficult due to the fact the Federal Law is nationwide and shipping old inventory to neighboring states will not be an option.

What is different about the new alloys? The basic properties, performance, and appearance of the metals are similar to the product being sold today. However, it does require more care during every step of the manufacturing process and this does add cost. **Does that mean it costs more?** Yes, no lead alloy products cost 25% to 40% more than the product we manufacture and sell today. As manufacturers gain experience with the new alloys and become more efficient, we are optimistic the cost differential will diminish.

What are the concerns for the manufacturers I deal with today? This has been an issue our industry has been researching for many years. We feel comfortable saying all leading manufacturers have completed their respective “learning curve” periods with these new alloys. The more serious issues will arise in the transition period in the 12 months leading up to the new laws becoming effective.

Will availability be an issue for customers? For our pipeline products, repair products, and restrainers: No. Brass items: *Regrettably, yes...*

- **Today**, we have already begun to deal with our inventory issues. Low demand items (slow turning inventory) are being addressed right now (scrapped, sold, or recycled). As the effective date of the new law approaches, the more aggressive this course of action will become.
- **One year** in advance of the new law becoming effective (1/2013) we plan to replenish our inventory only with items made from the no lead alloy. Orders for our traditional brass alloy will be accepted, but because these items will no longer come from our inventory... delivery/lead times will change from days – to weeks.
- **Six months** in advance of the new law (7/2013). Because of the complexities we face converting our manufacturing facilities to produce no lead products. We do not anticipate it will be possible to accept orders for leaded brass products.

Being proactive and changing specifications in advance of the new law may do more harm than good. All Manufacturers are faced with the significant challenge of updating foundries and retrofitting manufacturing plants in order to produce these new alloys. Working towards the deadline, the new Federal Law mandate will allow everyone to focus on a singular date. Obviously, the challenge to service the demands of a wide variety of arbitrary dates is sure to present even more availability and supply issues for our industry.

Additional information for your review: please read the attached Regulatory Overview provided by Mark Anderson, our Product Engineering Manager.