

CASE STUDY

CONNECTICUT PLUMBING CONTRACTOR SUCCESSFULLY BALANCES SKYROCKETING COPPER PRICES AND CUSTOMER DEMAND BY SWITCHING TO FLOWGUARD GOLD® CPVC

Delson Plumbing and Heating

New Haven, Connecticut

Established: 1976

Small Firm Finishes Residential Projects 33 Percent Faster

For small plumbing contractors, every team member is essential to the firm's success. Every employee is critical to meeting customer deadlines, turning around projects in a timely manner and maintaining the firm's reputation for high quality and excellent work. Owners are constantly looking for ways to streamline operations and run their business more efficiently and profitably without having to necessarily add new employees.

New Haven, Conn., contractor Delson Plumbing & Heating is no exception. In early 2006, the eight-employee firm found itself in the same boat as many other contractors – confronted with the ongoing rise in material costs as the price of copper continued to skyrocket. At the same time, owner James Fenn was approached by one of the company's largest customers, national luxury home builder Toll Brothers Inc., who was looking to its subcontractors for ways to reduce costs.

"When Toll Brothers approached us, I knew that we needed to investigate alternatives to copper," Fenn stated. "In the last couple of years, we just saw the cost of copper continuing to climb – affecting our ability to stay price competitive. So we went back to the drawing board."

In doing so, Fenn determined the firm needed a product that had an established track record, more stable material costs and provided a solid foundation as he continued to grow and expand the business. After detailed research and talking to his peers, Fenn found his answer in FlowGuard Gold® CPVC or chlorinated polyvinyl chloride.

"We did our homework, talked to other contractors, found out what was working and what wasn't," Fenn explained. "FlowGuard Gold CPVC offered numerous advantages – stable pricing, more than 45 years in use, and perhaps, most attractive to us, faster installation than copper."

Staying Ahead in a Competitive Market

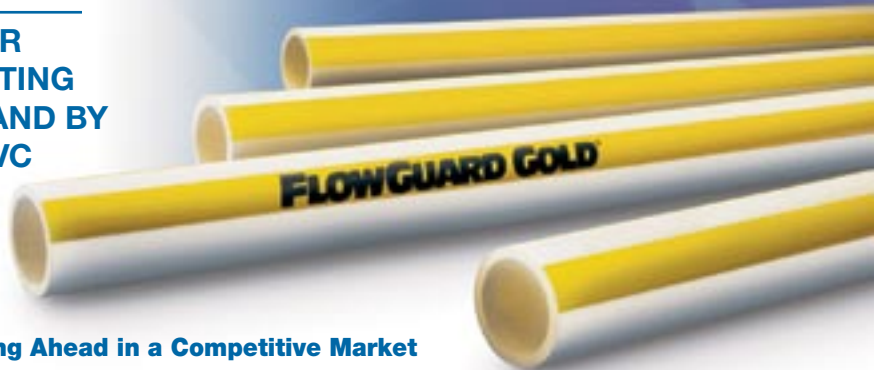
The majority of Delson Plumbing & Heating's business is in the residential market – working on luxury, single-family homes with 4,000 square feet of space, down to a community of 2,000- to 3,000-square-foot townhomes – with the remaining in mixed commercial space.

Fenn explained that Delson Plumbing & Heating is working in a very competitive market. Connecticut's housing market continues to grow – especially as young professionals and baby boomers regularly demand higher quality and more spacious homes. Add to this the rising cost of land, labor and raw materials, and builders are pressured to stay price competitive, while incorporating more and more standard luxury features into new homes. The builders are looking to their partners and subcontractors, such as Delson Plumbing & Heating, to help them stay price competitive.

"Our business is driven by our reputation. Companies the size of Toll Brothers have a choice of which subcontractors they work with. We have to be on top of our game on every house, in every development, on every project," Fenn stated. "We are constantly looking for ways to work faster and smarter while maintaining high quality standards. FlowGuard Gold CPVC pipe is another tool in our arsenal to allow us to do just that."

In the middle of 2006, Delson Plumbing & Heating was working on a Toll Brothers development of 35 large, luxury single-family homes, ranging in size from 4,000 to 5,000 square feet, each with three-and-a-half baths. The firm used CPVC on a majority of these homes. Next, Delson Plumbing & Heating tackled another Toll Brothers project which included 75 townhomes and installed CPVC exclusively on all 75 units.

"On our first single-family home, we saved at least 10 hours, or about a third of our typical time, by installing CPVC. And as my guys have



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Type of Construction:
Residential / Single Family

Installation Type:
New

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NOT A DROP OF DOUBT.

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gotten more comfortable with the product, we've seen even greater time savings. It's like having an extra guy on the job," Fenn explained.

In the span of only four months, the firm has become nearly a 100-percent CPVC shop. According to Fenn, the firm is only installing copper when specifically requested.

CPVC Offers Attractive Advantages for Builders, Homebuyers

FlowGuard Gold CPVC pipe and fittings offer Delson Plumbing & Heating a number of other advantages. Over the years, the firm had experienced callbacks for pinhole leaks and corrosion issues with copper plumbing systems. Since CPVC is 100 percent resistant to corrosion and pitting, this will not be an issue. Fenn also found with copper systems there were the issues of the weight of the material and the need to lug around a torch.

"With copper, we always had to be hypersensitive to soldering too close to a wall or bumping into a cabinet with the torch," Fenn said. "Neither is a concern with CPVC."

CPVC is installed using a one-step solvent cement joining system, which can be tested within minutes. This makes CPVC not only faster to install, but also easier, cleaner and safer to install.

There is also a focus in the residential housing market to build homes that are energy efficient. Due the natural thermoplastic characteristics of FlowGuard Gold CPVC, less heat is lost than with a copper system, resulting in increased energy efficiency.

Additionally, CPVC provides other performance advantages that are very attractive to homeowners, including insulation properties that help reduce condensation and minimize the chances of drip damage to walls and furnishings. FlowGuard Gold CPVC also virtually eliminates the banging commonly heard in pipes when a valve shuts quickly.

"Water hammer was often an issue, especially with hot water running through a copper system. FlowGuard Gold CPVC has taken care of that," Fenn added. "CPVC allows our customers, the builders, to provide to their customers, the homebuyers, a plumbing system that operates quietly, requires virtually no maintenance and has no corrosion issues."

Fenn has been talking up FlowGuard Gold CPVC to other plumbing contractors: "I can't say enough good things about CPVC. It's met every criterion we set forth when we began the move away from copper. When my customer says 'are you sure you can handle this new project on time and on budget?', I can confidently say yes, every time – thanks to the FlowGuard Gold CPVC system."

Delson Plumbing & Heating continues to install CPVC systems in all new projects, as well as a number of retrofits and renovations. The firm has its sights set next on a 366-unit townhouse project for Toll Brothers that breaks ground in the spring.

Since Lubrizol's development of CPVC plumbing systems over 45 years ago, more than four (4) billion feet of CPVC pipe has been installed in homes, condominiums, buildings, apartments and hotels, including OVER twelve (12) million homes. For more information on the FlowGuard Gold® plumbing system, including pipes, valves, joining cement, caulks, sealants and tools, call 1-888-234-2436, X7393, or visit www.flowguardgold.com.

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