

# CASE STUDY

AWARD-WINNING, CONNECTICUT-BASED LUXURY BUILDER DIFFERENTIATES PRODUCT OFFERING WITH CUTTING EDGE, PROBLEM-SOLVING TECHNOLOGIES

## **Eric Strachan Custom Homes** **Woodbury, CT** *Established: 1984*

Perhaps it's because Eric Strachan's first experience with a home builder was such a disaster that he has become so committed to delivering the highest quality product to his own customers. According to Strachan, founder of Woodbury, Connecticut – based Eric Strachan Custom Homes, Inc., it was because he had spent the entire first year in his new home fixing problems and mistakes created by his own builder that he became interested in becoming a builder himself.

But after more than 20 years in the business (since 1984), Strachan believes he made the right decision. And, obviously, so do a number of other leaders in the local home building industry, as evidenced by the three prestigious awards that Strachan has received in the past two years from the HBA of Connecticut. It was in 2003 that Strachan won his first HOBI (Home Building Industry) Award for Best Custom Home 4,000 – 5,000 square feet. A year later in 2004 he came back and took two HOBI awards – one for Best Custom Home 6,000 – 7,000 square feet and one in the category of Special Purpose Room (a 50's styled garage complete with brick walls, acid-washed floor, retro lighting and antique gas pumps).

What's the secret to Strachan's success? In his own words, it's his ability to identify, and implement, the latest cutting edge technologies that either improve the quality of his end product or, in some way, solve or prevent a problem that could occur long after the traditional builder's warranty expires.

"I'm always looking for a better way," said Strachan. "I don't change the way I do things to save money or make more money. I switch because I truly think a product offers a better value for my customers. The homes I build are often valued near a million dollars. These customers have a right to be demanding. They expect the best and, if there is a problem, they won't hesitate to call me about it." Like most builders, Strachan is concerned about reducing callbacks. To minimize potential issues and problems relative to the plumbing system, Strachan switched nearly six years ago from copper pipe to FlowGuard Gold® CPVC pipe and fittings. He was one of the first builders in Connecticut, as well as the entire Northeast, to make the switch. And now he installs nothing else.



"I don't present options when it comes to a home's plumbing," Strachan said. "I know this is the best product, and that's what I offer. When I first switched, there were a few customers who questioned my preference. But I'd talk to them about the benefits, give them the FlowGuard Gold literature and take them on job sites into basements to show them the product installed. I've never had a customer refuse the product. And today, we rarely hear any questions."

Strachan first learned about the benefits of CPVC in the late 1990s when his foreman, a licensed plumber, brought the FlowGuard Gold product to his attention.

"We were starting to encounter a growing number of problems with copper pipe," said Strachan. "Each year the houses we build are getting larger. That means more of them have well water. I'd say nearly 98 percent of the homes we build are on well water. Plus, with a bigger house, the demand for water increases. Some of our homes have six or seven bathrooms, and many have automatic sprinkler systems. So with more pipes, you notice more problems."

One key problem was copper's susceptibility to corrosion and scaling. According to Strachan, houses only five years old were showing signs of blockages and corrosion. And in more than one instance, the corrosion had already led to a leak.

"Since I've switched to the FlowGuard Gold system, we haven't had any leaks—ever," said Strachan. "I can't believe that everyone isn't using this product, because it makes so much sense just due to corrosion issues alone. Now I don't have to give a second thought about pH levels, because no matter how hard or aggressive the water is, I know the FlowGuard Gold pipe will never scale or corrode. Some towns in Connecticut are known for their low pH levels that can create havoc with copper pipe—kind of like clogged



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**Type of Construction:**  
Residential

**Installation Type:**  
New

**FLOWGUARD GOLD**  
PIPE & FITTINGS  
**NOT A DROP OF DOUBT.**

## FLOWGUARD GOLD

arteries in the heart. But with CPVC, the levels don't matter—not today or down the road."

Well water doesn't just mean corrosion concerns for homeowners in Connecticut; it also means excessive condensation.

"With a well, the water is being drawn sometimes from as deep as 300 feet beneath the ground," explained Strachan. "So it's really cold. You run that through copper pipe when the outside temperature is 80 degrees or more and you're going to see a lot of drips from the pipes in the basement. My customers didn't like that and they'd call me about it. With the FlowGuard Gold system, condensation is not an issue due to the product's thermal conductivity. I remember one time even taking a prospective customer into the basement of an existing home with FlowGuard Gold pipe. It was summer, so the outdoor lawn sprinklers had been running for some time. But there were no signs of condensation anywhere."

The natural thermoplastic characteristics of CPVC pipe helped Strachan also eliminate another problem—noise.

"With copper, I'd get calls about the swishy sound," said Strachan. "And especially for homeowners with city water, there was that annoying resonating sound resulting from changes in the water pressure. Again, if you're paying nearly a million dollars for a home, you want the plumbing to be quiet. The FlowGuard Gold system eliminated those callbacks, too. With new prospects, I'll run water in a home and ask them to listen. They won't hear a thing if its FlowGuard Gold pipe in the walls."

An NSF International lab test confirmed that FlowGuard Gold CPVC pipe is, in fact, four times quieter than copper. Not only does it reduce water flow noise, but it also virtually eliminates the banging sound of water hammer.

Strachan's crew also discovered fewer problems with freeze-ups using CPVC pipe instead of copper. With the extreme temperatures in the Northeast, freezing pipes are a major concern. Strachan discovered he could safely use the CPVC pipe in colder weather than what was allowed with copper.

The crew also couldn't help but notice how much faster and easier the product was to install. The FlowGuard Gold CPVC

system can be installed in one-third to one-half less time, depending on the size of the home, because it utilizes a convenient, one-step solvent cement bonding system. No soldering torch or heavy equipment is needed for installation. As a result, not only is the installation faster, but it's also safer and cleaner.

After six years of solid performance, Strachan has grown to become such a strong believer in the FlowGuard Gold CPVC system that he used it in his own million-dollar-plus home built in 2004. The \$1.4 million, 6,000+ square-foot home, where he now resides, was the winner of one of his recent HOBI quality awards—and with good reason. According to Strachan, even the mechanical room looks like a showroom with a tiled floor and brick wall behind the boiler. The woodwork, all done in cherry, represents a several-hundred-thousand-dollar investment by itself. The Frank Lloyd Wright-styled home has the potential to be easily expanded to a full 8,800 square feet.

In keeping with his reputation for building high-technology homes of distinction, Strachan's home also features a number of high-performance products not found yet in most homes currently on the market, including Superior pre-cast walls that feature a natural stucco finish and carry a 15-year warranty against cracking, and an I-joist flooring system that replaces traditional dimensional lumber floors. And, of course, behind his walls are FlowGuard Gold CPVC pipe and fittings.

"I'll never go back to copper," said Strachan. "FlowGuard Gold CPVC pipe is all I use in the roughly 35 homes I build each year because it's the best piping product on the market. A lot of builders here in the Northeast are reluctant to change. They feel that copper is more traditional. But my thinking is that I'm not taking the same medications my dad took, so why should I use the same plumbing system when there's something better? The FlowGuard Gold system isn't just different; it's superior."

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](http://www.flowguardgold.com).

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