

CASE STUDY

TOP PLUMBING CONTRACTOR IN TWIN CITIES EXPERIENCES SUBSTANTIAL LABOR SAVINGS BY INSTALLING FLOWGUARD GOLD® CPVC PIPE

Plymouth Plumbing

St. Paul, MN Service Area: Twin Cities

Established: 1981

Noise & Condensation Reduction Also Lead List of Reasons Plymouth Plumbing Is Switching From Copper

Just ask nearly any plumber who installs pipe around the Twin Cities metropolitan area in Minnesota and you'll hear that the water quality there is practically as good as it can get anywhere in the U.S. As a result, the region experiences a less-than-average incidence of copper pipe corrosion.



Yet, that didn't stop one of the area's largest residential plumbing contractors from realizing that there was still a better alternative to copper. It was in 1998 that Plymouth Plumbing took its first serious look at FlowGuard Gold® CPVC pipe and fittings and eventually became one of the first contractors in the area to convert from its exclusive use of copper pipe.

"Our initial interest in the FlowGuard Gold® CPVC product was a result of its labor savings claims," noted general manager Randy Hallstrom. "In discussing the idea of converting to CPVC from copper with one of our largest national builders, we learned they were already using FlowGuard Gold® pipe and fittings in other divisions across the country and were realizing tremendous benefits in addition to the upfront cost savings."

Since 1981, Plymouth Plumbing has evolved from single family, new construction homes to multi-housing and commercial projects, and now offers HVAC and utility services. With over 200 employees, Plymouth Plumbing is known and recognized for their tradition of excellence, providing quality installations for the area's top, award winning builders.

"We take pride in being an innovative leader in this area. We are always looking at new products, new procedures, and new technologies to improve what we are doing," said Hallstrom. "Because of the competitive nature of this business, we are always looking for ways to save our builders money and be competitive."

Because our business is built on quality installations and long-term relationships with our builders, we will not waste our time looking at products that cannot deliver outstanding results."

After first testing the product in a limited number of installations, Hallstrom, along with owner Kent Johnston and field operations manager Jerry Olson noticed major labor-saving benefits almost immediately.

"We realized that with copper, on average it would take a journeyman and his apprentice about one-and-a-half days to do a typical two story home with 3 baths," explained Hallstrom. "When we used the FlowGuard Gold® CPVC system, we found that they never had to go back the second day. The work was always finished within the first day."

The reason for this tremendous labor savings was no mystery to Hallstrom. "It just makes sense that if you have a product that can simply be cut and solvent cemented together, it will require less time," he noted. "With the CPVC pipe you don't have to cut it, ream it, polish it, polish the fittings, apply the flux and then solder. It's a lot fewer steps."

More important than the time savings was the reliability of the joint. "Since we started using FlowGuard Gold® pipe and fittings, we have had virtually no problems with leaks," said Hallstrom. "With copper, we may have seen as many as two leaks for every ten homes we installed. The solvent cement used with the CPVC system is just a much more reliable way to connect pipe. And as a result, we've seen a substantial reduction in callbacks."

In addition to the more reliable bond, Hallstrom appreciated the safer installation method. "When installing the CPVC pipe, there is no need for a torch like there is with a copper installation," he said. "The combination of an open flame and gas in the house creates more than a single problem. Along with the smell and the smoke, I've seen more than one flare-up in a house where copper pipe was being installed. And I've heard about other plumbers in town that have lost entire homes because of soldering accidents."

According to Hallstrom, the risk of fire is even greater today with the use of lead-free solder. "When the solder contained 50% lead, you didn't have to heat the copper pipe as much," he said. "With lead-free solder, you need to heat the pipe more, and sometimes, this can cause the wood joists or trusses, which the copper tubing is supported on, to catch fire. If you look at almost any home during construction, you will probably see some burn marks on the wood framing caused by a plumber's torch."



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Type of Construction:
Residential -
Single Family

Installation Type:
New

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

FLOWGUARD GOLD®

Pleasantly Surprised by Added Benefits

As time passed and a larger percentage of their work now involves FlowGuard Gold® pipe and fittings, Plymouth has been pleasantly surprised to discover other benefits in addition to those experienced during installation.

"We realized the CPVC pipe didn't just benefit us, but also the builder and especially the homeowner," said Hallstrom. "I believe that noise reduction is a primary reason for a homeowner to want CPVC pipe instead of copper. I have noticed the FlowGuard Gold® CPVC system is much quieter."

Hallstrom blames much of copper pipes noise transmission on today's tightly regulated, low-flow faucets. "With the government mandated energy conservation restrictions, tub and shower faucets have smaller outlets. The noise is created when the water is reduced from a full-sized pipe through these smaller openings. At times, I could hear a faucet running from the other side of the house, and we work on some very large, beautiful homes. The CPVC pipe is dramatically quieter and virtually eliminates noise transmission and also water hammer noise."

Hallstrom isn't the only one who thinks the FlowGuard Gold® CPVC system is quieter. NSF International, a leading testing lab, has confirmed that the product is, in fact, four times quieter than copper.

After testing FlowGuard Gold® pipe and fittings in the field for only a short time, Hallstrom noticed another added benefit, condensation on cold water lines was missing. "There is an old saying in Minnesota in the summer, it's not the heat, but the humidity that makes it miserable," Hallstrom explained. "That can leave you with some very wet and messy copper pipes due to all the condensation. This can lead to water stains on finished ceilings and possible mold problems. But with FlowGuard Gold® pipe, it really does a great job in reducing condensation, even in the hottest weather."

As more and more of Plymouth's builders have agreed to convert to FlowGuard Gold® pipe and fittings, Hallstrom has seen some of them position the product as an upgrade, even though it's less expensive.

"This is a highly competitive market," explained Hallstrom. "Builders are always looking for a way to keep their prices competitive, but they don't want to cheapen their product. With the FlowGuard Gold® CPVC system, they can offer their customers a better product at a competitive price, so why shouldn't they make the switch?"

Hallstrom's goal is to eventually convert all of his builders to plastic pipe. "We also install a small amount of PEX plumbing, typically in the projects where we are doing multiple units, like townhomes, condominiums and apartment buildings" he explained. "But my plumbers prefer the FlowGuard Gold® pipe because unlike the PEX tubing, they can make it look nice and straight when they are done installing it. Our plumbers take pride in how their installations look and appreciate the professional appearance of a completed FlowGuard Gold® system. In fact, in the Twin Cities metro area, we have won many prestigious awards for quality plumbing installations on houses exceeding several million dollars, and the FlowGuard Gold® pipe will only help us win more in the future."

Hallstrom continued, "If I had it my way, all of our builders would be using FlowGuard Gold® pipe and fittings today. I honestly believe as our builders become better educated on the benefits and more comfortable with "plastic pipe", they will all switch to FlowGuard Gold®. We work very closely with our FlowGuard Gold® CPVC sales rep, who is a tremendous help in answering builder questions and building their confidence in the product. Beyond that, the product just sells itself. It's quieter, which is really important. It's energy efficient, and it's reliable. That's huge. What it really comes down to is quality. Today's homeowners are better educated and demand more. With Lubrizol's FlowGuard Gold®, we are able to give them more."

Since Lubrizol's development of CPVC plumbing systems over 45 years ago, more than three (3) billion feet of CPVC pipe has been installed in homes, condominiums, buildings, apartments and hotels, including 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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FlowGuard Gold® CPVC Marketing Department

9911 Brecksville Road
Cleveland, Ohio 44141-3201 USA
888.234.2436 ext.7393
216.447.5000
216.447.5750 FAX