

Know You Should



A Message from the American Concrete Pipe Association

Bulletin No. 123

IS YOUR PROJECT IN THEIR SIGHTS?

When a contractor asks an owner or designer to change a job to HDPE pipe, you might question his motives. A major manufacturer of HDPE pipe has taken an unconventional route to gain business. Rather than competing with concrete pipe on the basis of value, the manufacturer has offered a free shotgun in exchange for converting a project to their pipe from concrete pipe.

Ironically, the offer states that the manufacturer has a “*philosophy of excellence in customer service... protects the contractor’s reputation for quality...and exceptional value.*” The offer of a shotgun in return for specification changes does not reflect any of these traits. Concrete pipe producers offer the benefits of excellent customer service, quality and value, not personal enticements in return for patronage.

This reward program raises some serious questions:

- **Are the products equal?** – Specifications for gravity pipe products sometimes include the phrase “concrete pipe or equal”. This invites the disregard of carefully prepared plans and specifications. Concrete pipe has superior strength, superior hydraulic efficiency, and durability, and an established product life longer than any other pipe. **When it comes to drainage pipe, there is no equal.**
- **Why does the contractor want to change to HDPE pipe?** – When the contractor requests a change to an alternate pipe material, examine the economic based reasons. Needless to say, a free shotgun should not be one of them. The installed cost of concrete pipe and its soil-structure is often less expensive than that of the properly installed soil-structure dependent flexible pipe.
- **What is “Value Engineering?”** – The engineering catch phrase of the 20th century can sometimes be a convenient excuse for using an inferior product. Value Engineering should include a life cycle cost analysis that accounts for the replacement costs of using an inferior product. *ASTM C 1131 Standard Practice for Least Cost (Life Cycle) Analysis of Concrete Culvert, Storm Sewer, and Sanitary Sewer Systems*, covers procedures for least cost analysis for drainage pipe materials.
- **Is it worth the risk?** – Part of the responsibilities of the civil engineering professional is to protect the public health through proper design and construction. Specifying a quality product such as concrete pipe is an example of how a designer may safeguard the lives of the public and reduces one’s exposure to liability. Limit your liability by specifying a pipe material that has lasted in excess of 100 years.

This HDPE pipe promotion is way off target, don’t let anyone blow holes in your project.

For more information about the advantages of concrete pipe and what those other products are up to, contact your local concrete pipe representative.

(A copy of the shotgun promotional flyer is available from ACPA offices upon request)