Milestones in PVC Water Pipe History

Technology and performance have made PVC pipe the most popular choice for water and sewer lines.

1932 – First tubes were made from polyvinyl chloride (PVC) in Germany.

1935 – The first PVC pipes were manufactured (Germany).

1936 – PVC pipes began to be installed for residential drinking water distribution and waste pipelines (Germany). Most are still in service.

1949 – Initial use of PVC pipe in North America.

1952 – PVC pipe introduced in the U.S.

1955 – First PVC water distribution pipes laid in the U.S.


1966 – AWWA appointed a committee to study and report on the adaptability of plastic pipe for use in the water industry.

1967 – AWWA recommends that a task group be appointed to prepare standards for plastic pipe.

1968 – The AWWA Standards Committee on Thermoplastic Pressure Pipe was established.


1971 – First meeting (Oct. in Philadelphia) of the non-profit, Integral Gasketed Joint Plastic Pipe Association (re-named the Uni-Bell Plastic Pipe Association in April 1972). Headquarters were located in New York City. (We have a 7 x 10, B&W photo of the meeting.)
1972 – Uni-Bell published first PVC municipal water pipe standard (UNI-B-2), which was the predecessor to AWWA Standard C900.

1975 – AWWA’s Board of Directors approved the first edition of AWWA C900, “AWWA Standard for Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) Pressure Pipe, 4 in. through 12 in., for Water”.

1976 – Uni-Bell moves to Dallas, Texas and hires full-time Director.


1985 – The 750,000th mile of PVC rural water pipe was installed in the U.S.

1986 – Uni-Bell publishes recommended standard for water transmission pipes (UNI-B-11) up to 36 inches in diameter.

1988 – Initial approval and publication of AWWA C905, “AWWA Standard for PVC Water Transmission Pipe, Nominal Diameters 14 in. through 36 in.”


1996 – PVC water pipes’ (>3 in.) market share exceeds 50%, making PVC the number one water pipe in the U.S. and Canada.


1997 – Size range increased to 48 inches with publication of the second edition of AWWA C905, “AWWA Standard for PVC Pressure Pipe and Fabricated Fittings, 14 in. through 48 in., for Water Transmission and Distribution”.

1998 – Approval and first publication of AWWA C909, “AWWA Standard for Molecularly Oriented PVCO Pressure Pipe, 4 in. through 12 in., for Water Distribution”.

2002 – Size range increased to 24 inches with publication of the second edition of AWWA C909, “AWWA Standard for Molecularly Oriented PVCO Pressure Pipe, 4 in. through 24 in. for Water Distribution”.


2004 – The unequaled performance and cost effectiveness of PVC water pipes resulted in a 78% share of the water distribution pipe in 2004 (over 71,100 miles), according to a study of the U.S. and Canadian buried pipe markets for pipe diameters 4-inch and larger.


2005 – AwwaRF publishes the results of extensive multi-year evaluation of PVC water pipe, which projects that the failure rates for PVC pipes in service for 110 years will be less than those currently being experienced with other pipe materials. The AwwaRF publication is entitled, “Long-Term Performance Prediction for PVC Pipes”.

2005 – PVC is the largest volume plastic pipe material in North America with annual sales in excess of 6.8 billion pounds in 2005.

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