

TWO-THOUSAND TWO

# Manufacturers Spotlight

2002

## Charlotte Pipe: You Can't Beat The System

Let's face it, when you think of plumbing pipe and fittings, high tech is not the first thing that comes to mind. But while the pipe and fittings themselves are not exactly synonymous with high tech, the process Charlotte Pipe and Foundry employs for manufacturing them is.

"A company like ours might lead one to think of an old-line manufacturer," said Hooper Hardison, executive vice president for the Charlotte N.C.-based company. "But Charlotte Pipe is a forward thinking, 21st century company. We continually invest in technology, automation and e-business systems to produce superior products and provide excellent service to our customers."

The nation's leading maker of cast iron and plastic pipe and fittings, Charlotte Pipe and Foundry is the only manufacturer that offers a system of cast iron, PVC, CPVC, ABS and Flow-Guard® Gold™ pipe and fittings for residential and commercial plumbing systems and industrial applications.

"After 100 years, we are still a privately owned family company," Hardison said. "Private ownership means we can make decisions based on what's best long-term



**Charlotte Pipe reinvests profits into new plant equipment and technology.**

for the company and our employees, not for the quarterly earnings report or P/E ratio. Investments in technology are just one example of that philosophy."

These investments have made Charlotte Pipe's plants among the most modern of their type in the world. The company con-

tinues to add the latest machinery, technology and automation to its manufacturing processes through capital reinvestments. Production at each plant is completely automated, with programmable logic controller (PLC)-operated machines and tools. In house maintenance and tool-and-die specialists help eliminate downtime and keep the plants humming.

And it's not just the plants. Charlotte Pipe also has adopted an e-business philosophy designed to provide customers with sales, product, account information and transactional capabilities in the format of their choice, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

New information systems, powered by SAP software, link order entry with inventory management and production scheduling, giving plant managers and customer service teams a wealth of information, including real-time inventory balances. As a result, plant scheduling and obtaining information on shipments is much quicker and more customer friendly.

Service reps use the software to check inventory, process the order, and within minutes, issue an electronic confirmation and an expected ship date. Using bar codes and advanced computer equipment, orders are fulfilled and shipped

TWO-THOUSAND TWO

# Manufacturers Spotlight

2002

accurately and quickly. EDI customers can receive notice when the order has shipped, detailing exactly what's on the truck and when it will arrive.

The company launched its newly redesigned web site ([www.charlottepipe.com](http://www.charlottepipe.com)) with a special, password-protected Extranet that allows distributors instant access to their account information. With the new web site, distributors can:

- Check orders and overall account status, including shipping data
- Search for orders by date, sales document, P.O. number, material number or customer name
- Track shipments
- Check back orders
- View invoices and credits
- Receive proof of delivery

"We know distributors and customers are busy," said Bill Morris, e-business director. "Our goal is to make it as easy as possible to do business with Charlotte Pipe and Foundry by offering a number of convenient ways for customers to quickly get the information they need."

Improved navigation and redesigned graphics make the new web site easier to use. In addition to the Extranet, the web site offers customers up-to-date price sheets, dimensional CAD drawings for products, and in-depth technical information, all in multiple formats. The site also offers a "stay up-to-date" feature where users can register to receive regular updates from Charlotte Pipe, including automatic price sheet updates. Future development will allow customers to place orders from the Charlotte catalog right from their desktop PC.

"Along with our Fax-On-Demand service, the new web site reduces transaction costs by providing customers with value

added services that make them more profitable," Morris said. The new Fax-On-Demand Information Service makes it easier for customers to quickly access information they need, such as price sheets, MSDS sheets and more. Customers can call 1-800-745-9382 to order information. In minutes, the requested documents are faxed directly to the customer.

Charlotte Pipe also has developed a complete set of AutoCAD drawings in 2-D and 3-D that are available on CD or on the web site. The CD includes all the product specifications and technical data that plumbing engineers and OEMs need to design their systems.

"Everything at Charlotte Pipe is designed to work together seamlessly, from our products, to our operations, to our people," Hardison said. "We're the only company that manufactures plastic pipe and fittings to the middle of the spec range as defined by ASTM for a tight, reliable fit every time. We call it the TrueFit™ System. Using pipe and fittings from Charlotte and following our seven simple steps to a no-leak joint means you'll work more efficiently, with fewer callbacks. That's a sure way to save money and add value for your customers."

According to Hardison, the Quiet House® System is also something you won't find anywhere else because Charlotte is the only company that makes PVC and cast iron pipe and fittings. When used together in a waste piping system, customers get high performance that combines the best features of sound-deadening cast iron and economical PVC. Builders and homeown-



**Our Disamatic Molding Machines produce high-volume, world-class castings.**

ers will appreciate that it's twice as quiet as an all PVC system, yet very affordable.

An experienced group of officers provides effective leadership for Charlotte Pipe and Foundry. Combined, the 12-member team has more than 230 years of service dedicated to the company. Through their commitment to the company and by working together efficiently, this team ensures that Charlotte Pipe is on track to serve our customers' needs.

"As we look forward to our second century of business in the plumbing industry, we face new challenges," Hardison said. "But the one constant set by our founder, W.F. Dowd, remains the same: Make the best products you can, and back them up with excellent service."

Contact Charlotte Pipe and Foundry at P.O. Box 35430, Charlotte, NC 28235. Or call us at 800/438-6091 or fax us at 800/553-1605. Visit us online at [www.charlottepipe.com](http://www.charlottepipe.com).

Circle 28