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## Confidence in HDPE Pipe Growing

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*Demand for HDPE is increasing in water and wastewater industries and this expert explains reasons for growth*

- By Tim Gregorski

In recent years, demand for high- density polyethylene pipe (HDPE) for use in water and wastewater applications has grown significantly.

Helping to spur this demand, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recently announced new changes to its national construction and maintenance regulation ("Summary of Acceptable Criteria for Specifying Types of Culvert Pipes"), for the application of alternative types of pipe, such as HDPE, in federal-aid highway projects. The decision was made to ensure each state's department of transportation promotes greater competition within the underground drainage industry, creates greater efficiency and reduces project costs.

Water & Wastes Digest recently interviewed Joe Chlapaty, president and CEO of Advanced Drainage Systems, about HDPE's role in water and wastewater applications, how the FHWA's specification changes impact HDPE and finally, a general overview of our nation's infrastructure.

**WWD:** *Why is there a growing demand for HDPE pipe in the water and wastewater industries?*

**Joe Chlapaty:** We believe there are several reasons for the continued growth of HDPE.

First, engineers are increasingly specifying a higher performance requirement that requires the benefits of our HDPE products over traditional piping systems. The joints of HDPE pipe are superior to other pipe types. As the regulatory environment has become more stringent, the need for leak-free joints has become much more commonplace.

Second, HDPE can be installed more quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively than other types of pipe. This saves time and money, and is less disruptive to the respective community.

Third, HDPE pipe offers more options in terms of custom design. The fact that it can be welded enables engineers to creatively solve design problems. These same benefits are also very valuable to the contractor if last minute field changes are required.

Finally, the engineering and contractor communities have had 40 years of successful experience with HDPE.

**WWD:** *What impact has the FHWA had when it comes to specifying HDPE pipe for drainage-related projects?*

**Chlapaty:** The FHWA provides a level playing field in highway applications. They do not directly specify HDPE, yet by allowing the use of alternative types of pipe like HDPE, the FHWA is promoting greater competition within the underground drainage industry.

**WWD:** *What about water and wastewater applications—has the use of HDPE pipe increased?*

**Chlapaty:** Certainly. As the confidence in HDPE has grown, the number of applications in which it is being used has grown accordingly.

**WWD:** *What role will HDPE pipe play in the future of the water and wastewater industries?*

**Chlapaty:** We obviously feel it is going to play a much bigger role in the infrastructure of this country. As engineers and contractors continue to have positive experiences with HDPE, its use will continue to grow for a very long time.

With its high quality joints, extremely durable materials and economic benefits, it is quickly becoming the material of choice.

**WWD:** *Do you think the nation's water and wastewater infrastructure is failing?*

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**Chlapaty:** I wouldn't say the nation's infrastructure is failing, but it is in desperate need of updating to meet tighter EPA requirements and the demands of a growing population.

**WWD:** *What can be done to improve the infrastructure? Will it take an impossible amount of resources?*

**Chlapaty:** Looking at the total picture can be overwhelming, but by addressing improvements every year we can make significant progress and eventually complete reconstructed infrastructure within a reasonable amount of time, without bankrupting our municipalities.

**WWD:** *Are municipalities simply repairing the infrastructure or is more emphasis being placed on pipe replacement?*

**Chlapaty:** Municipalities are using a combination of both, based on the amount of corrosion or pipe failure as well as the overall needs of the community.

In some cases, corroding or failing pipes can be repaired and continue working. Many times pipes do need to be replaced, especially combined storm and sanitary systems. Now we're seeing many of these being separated and replaced with entirely new pipe systems.

*Tim Gregorski is editorial director of Water & Wastes Digest. For additional information, contact WWD at 847/391-1011 or by e-mail at nsimeonova@sgcmail.com.*

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3030 W. Salt Creek Lane, Suite 201  
Arlington Heights, Illinois 60005-5025 USA  
P: 847-391-1000 | F: 847-390-0408

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