

Valves



Risk or safety
Valves in drinking water installations





The risk

Each supplier underlines the reasons why one should especially choose his product. If his argumentation focuses only on the price, in particular when his offer is considerably cheaper than those of known competitors, one should be careful.

This particularly applies to the components of drinking water installations. When the components do not fulfil safety, hygiene and fitness-for-use requirements, buildings, but first and foremost human health, can be seriously damaged.

Regardless of these aspects, consumers often lay more emphasis on economic considerations than on important matters like product quality and safety. Unfortunately, this also applies to the selection of valves, which have to fulfil important and safety-related functions within the drinking water installation. Cut-price suppliers nourish this trend by using channels of distribution, which turn the product price into the central, if not the sole content of their advertising campaigns.

Consumers take a high risk with this way of thinking, as the devices used in relation with drinking water require a high degree of quality and reliability. They ignore that health and life are unpayable goods.

Awareness must be raised regarding the possible consequences of a mentality based on “saving money at any price versus health”: the lessor’s liability to pay damages to the tenants, loss of the homeowner’s insurance coverage for damages on own buildings, product liability claims against a dealer, when a manufacturer cannot be made responsible or when it is difficult to do so, or when he presents himself as a so-called “quasi-manufacturer” (“Trademarks”) or warranty claims against a processor, to mention only a few.

What one needs to be aware of in any case is that not only manufacturers are responsible for the quality of their products, but also dealers, processors and homeowners decide about the product selection and can be made liable under certain conditions by consumers in case of damage.



The problem

In contrast to many other products, dealers, processors or homeowners can only assess the product quality of valves for drinking water installations superficially. The user finds out as to whether a valve really fulfils all necessary requirements, in particular with regard to the materials used, only when it is possibly too late, when damage has already occurred.

German, European and international guidelines, regulations and technical rules, which define product requirements, aim at preventing this situation.

But which dealer, processor or homeowner knows these technical rules in detail and can ask the manufacturer concerned concrete questions about the product's conformity with the relevant technical standards?

This is the reason why unscrupulous suppliers regularly succeed in all parts of the world in selling valves, which do not meet the safety rules in

effect. They also take advantage of the fact that purchasers often do not know the details of the product marking to be asked for and/or its meaning. They offer valves with labels, which give the impression to be manufactured according safety standards in effect that guarantee functionality and health protection.

The "ISO 9001" labelling nourishes the widespread misconception that quality management guarantees in any case high product quality. However, quality management does not imply per se that a product is of high quality. Quality management "only" controls the attainment of a given product quality. This means that the manufacturing process of a cut-price product can be submitted to a very good quality management, but without fulfilling the product standards in effect. As a result, it needs to be made clear that the quality certification in accordance with ISO 9001 does not certify the product itself, but "only" the quality management in the manufacturing process.



However, the worst form of deceit is the totally illegal marking of a product or its packaging with the test mark of a recognised test institute, which gives even the well-informed customers the impression that the product has successfully undergone comprehensive product tests.

The safety

When can a planner, dealer, processor, homeowner or customer be sure that the offered product fulfils the requirements in effect in Germany and elsewhere?

Fortunately, there are clear signs indicating the level of quality of a supplier, despite all attempts to deceive made by suppliers of low-quality goods and many purchasers' unawareness of safety standards.

First of all, the manufacturer (or seller) of a product should be clearly recognisable, which demonstrates that he is willing to assume responsibility in the event of default. Otherwise, it may remain unclear as to whether and against whom the aggrieved party can claim for damages.

Another important sign for the quality of a product is the extent of the range of additional product-specific services offered by the manufacturer. Usually, suppliers of low quality cut-price products look for quick business and leave the customer alone after the buying decision. By contrast, quality-oriented market suppliers attend the customer during the entire life cycle of their products with additional services. Qualified field representatives, convincing delivery capacities, spare parts and availability guarantees over many years and cost-reducing logistics solutions for marketing partners belong today to the standard

offer of those suppliers, which use high quality, continuity, reliability and confidence as a basis for their marketing activities. By doing so, they demonstrate that they assume responsibility for their own products.

When manufacturers distinguished themselves as innovators as a result of considerable research and development efforts over many years or even decades, there should not be any doubts as to the high quality level of their products. Why else investing continuously in the further development of one's products, if not for building long-term customer loyalty on the grounds of quality?

Regardless of this, many recognised high-quality suppliers submit their products to independent certification institutes all around the globe in order to get the confirmation that their products are in conformity with the respective technical rules. When in doubt, this creates additional safety for the purchaser. When a supplier is unknown, it is highly recommended to make an inquiry on the trustworthiness and legitimacy of his certification body and on the content of the certificate concerned.

The offer

Brand suppliers providing valves for drinking water installations have been standing for recognised quality for decades. Their products reliably take aspects like safety, hygiene and environmental protection into consideration.

The well-established quality management system, which of course takes the current state of international technical regulations into account, ensures an unquestionable product standard on global scale.

The additional product-specific range of services and the innovative capacity of these manufacturers speak for themselves.

Wholesalers, skilled craftsmen, homeowners and other parties involved in the product selection are well advised to base themselves on this quality requirement to prevent far-reaching negative effects.

Find further information on the website:

arm.vdma.org

This website also includes the VDMA member companies' product catalogue as well as links to their own websites.

Contact the following address for additional individual requests:

VDMA
Valves
Lyoner Str. 18
60528 Frankfurt am Main
Phone +49 69 6603-1238
E-Mail armaturen@vdma.org



VDMA

Valves

Lyoner Str. 18
60528 Frankfurt am Main

Contact

Phone +49 69 6603-1238

E-Mail armaturen@vdma.org

Internet arm.vdma.org

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