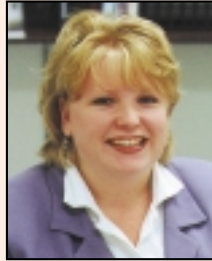


Home Buyer Awareness



I have started the new year on the right foot. I bought a house. I have spent many years day dreaming about my first home. The fireplace, staircase, patio, large kitchen, an office and my very own driveway ... which of course I will despise by the end of this harsh Chicago winter.

But as I decorated each room in my head and even told the realtor the specifics about what I was looking for, I never gave a second thought ... or even a first for that matter ... to the water quality in my new home. (Shameful in my line of work.) I was quite sure sewer water would not be pouring from my faucets, but I never thought beyond that.

As I followed my inspector, Bill, from room to room, I was pleasantly surprised twice—once with a water softener and once with a reverse osmosis system (both were included with the house). Bill was surprised that I knew specifics about these products and that he didn't have to review them.

I suppose in all of this, my point is that most consumers never consider the water they are getting themselves into when they purchase a new home. Consumers are becoming more aware of such water treatment systems, so newer homes are starting to include them as a standard item instead of an "added bonus."

With privatization and dealers struggling to find ways to remain in the market, this awareness and demand is creating quite a niche. As part of our New Year's "Industry Predictions" on page 16, Ian Knapp, president of Alamo Water Refiners, points out that the most exciting development to look for this year is water treatment being treated as an appliance provided with the home instead of something a buyer can add later. Water quality in the past has not been a priority for home owners/buyers but with further public education, expansion and developments, our business is changing.

Also, to aid in strategic planning for the year is the help of other industry professionals that donated some time to tell us what awaits in 2001. Patrick Dalee, Sid Fly and Dr. Alan Leff share their thoughts on the new year and where the industry is headed in 2001 and beyond.

Greatest of luck to each of you in the new year.

Wendi

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