



Stainless Steel Sink Certification: the Scandal of the Free Sink

by Tom Robinson

Not all but MOST stainless steel sinks given away as free promotions to sell counter tops **DO NOT MEET LOCAL BUILDING CODE**. If you received a "free sink" with your counter top it is possible even likely that it is not certified to meet the Uniform Plumbing Code (UPC)[®], International Plumbing Code (IPC)[®] or the National Plumbing Code of Canada (NPC)[®].

All components of the plumbing system are required by the above listed codes to be certified by a third party accredited agency to comply with standards listed in the codes. For example, if you go to your local building supply store you will notice there is a label on every pipe listing the standards that the pipe meets. This is the certification information. In the case of stainless steel sinks the standard is ASME A112.19.3.

In the days before the internet components of your plumbing system were sold largely through plumbing supply houses. Being in the plumbing industry these organizations understood and self policed these requirements. Then came the internet and anyone could buy anything certified or not.

Many counter top fabricators when the market slowed were looking for a promotion to boost sales. They began giving away a free stainless sink with their countertops. The promotion was so successful that in some markets the free sink became the standard. Fabricators looking to stay competitive began looking for the cheapest sink they could find to use as these promotional sinks. Many were not aware of the code requirements or if they knew did not care because after all it was a "free sink." When you give away a free sink price not quality is the issue.

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Certification is expensive. Not only does the product have to be tested but the accredited agency must visit the factory every six months to verify that all the processes that are part of the standards are still being followed.

How do you know if a sink is certified? That is a difficult question to answer. One of the requirements of the codes is that the sink be marked in a place accessible in the final installation with the manufacturer's name and model number so the sink can be researched. Most accredited agencies also require that the product be marked with the agencies certification stamp. If the sink is not marked it does not comply with the code. Marking alone does not mean certification. At least one major supplier to the fabrication industry listed for several years that they were certified when they were not. The best way to find out if you sink is certified is look for the mark and visit the accredited agencies web page not the sink company's website to find out if the manufacturer is listed. You can also ask for copies of the certification from the accredited agency not just a statement from the sink company.

So why do you care if your sink is not certified? It means the sink has not been tested to meet the standards. It may have impurities that will shorten the life of the sink or even make it unhealthy to use. It may be made of softer steel. It may not have the ingredients that give stainless steel sink the lustrous finish that is the signature of a high quality stainless steel sink. Or it may not have the ingredients that harden the finish that make the finish last a life time. If it is not tested and certified who knows what is in your stainless steel sink.

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