

## Manhattan Hotel Eliminates Clogged Toilet Complaints with Installation of American Standard Champion Toilets in Every Guestroom

*810 new 1.28 GPF toilets have improved guest satisfaction and are saving the Crowne Plaza Times Square more than 1 million gallons of water each year. The hotel's purchase also supports the Flush for Good global sanitation program.*

There's some good news for the hospitality industry, according to a 2013 survey by J. D. Power. Hotel guest satisfaction is at its highest point since 2006. The uptick is welcome; but smart hoteliers will remain vigilant, because when something does go wrong for hotel guests, it typically dominates all other aspects of their lodging experience.

That's particularly true with plumbing problems.

"No hotel guest wants to call down to the front desk and request a toilet plunger," said Michael Gilmore, national accounts manager at American Standard Brands, based in Piscataway, N.J. "And when they leave the hotel, will they remember the guest room, dining room or hotel amenities? No, they will remember the clogged toilet they had to deal with."

That is precisely the kind of negative experience the management team at the Crowne Plaza Times Square – Manhattan (New York, NY) solved recently when it replaced every guestroom toilet with the American Standard 1.28 gallons per flush (gpf) high efficiency Champion. "Clogged toilets were always in the top 10 complaints at the hotel each week and very often the top complaint," explained Vincent Curcio, director of engineering at the Crowne Plaza.

**Band-aid approach:** Most of the hotel's existing toilets dated back to the late 1980s, and many had been retrofitted over the years with internal parts intended to update them. But that band-aid approach changed the efficiency of the flush, said Curcio. "The old toilets seemed to struggle, using less water than they were designed for; and there were many continuously running toilets that wasted a lot of water." In short, the plumbing wasn't working, and something had to be done to eliminate guest inconvenience. That's when Crowne Plaza Managing Director Geoffrey Mills suggested that the hotel test a few different toilets as samples.

Enter Don Hammerschlag, the New York representative for HD Supply Facilities Maintenance. He recommended the hotel try the high-performing American Standard

Champion toilet and provided them with a sample. The Champion line is engineered not to clog, while meeting industry standards for both water efficiency and maximum flushing performance.

Curcio, as it turns out, was already familiar with the product. “I have been using two Champions in my own home for many years,” he said. “In a household with five children, these toilets really live up to their name.”

Testing Hammerschlag’s sample confirmed the direction the hotel would go, Curcio added. “When we received the first Champion toilet, the operation was great, and the look was also great for us. The Champion doesn’t sacrifice style. It was a perfect solution.” The hotel’s Mills gave the okay to start processing the paperwork for this capital expenditure.

**Total changeout:** The Crowne Plaza toilet-replacement project was an unusually large purchase. A typical order in a hotel of the same size is one or two dozen water closets, Hammerschlag said. But the smarter investment called for the hotel to replace all the toilets, effectively ending its clogging problems.

“In New York, any new toilet installation must meet the 1.28 gallons per flush requirement, regardless of the scope of the project,” said Hammerschlag. But the Champion solution did more than save water and reduce hotel maintenance and cleaning costs.

“New York City levies a sewer discharge fee for every gallon of waste entering the city’s sewer system,” Hammerschlag continued. “So with the Champion, the environment wins, and the hotel property saves money.”

Added Curcio: “Although saving money was not the main motivation for the Crowne Plaza project, the installation definitely lowered our usage and sewage costs, while putting less stress on the municipal system.”

Based on both Mills' and Curcio's recommendation, the Crowne Plaza owners chose to change all the toilets to Champions because clogging was an issue in almost all of the rooms. Consistency in looks and repair parts among the rooms were also contributing factors, but of course pricing was critical, as well. Hammerschlag worked closely with American Standard Brands to provide the hotel with a competitive package, including a \$10 rebate per toilet, and to work around the hotel’s available space during the project.

And there was more. “American Standard provided the Champion toilet with a slow-close quiet toilet seat, as well as a promotional cost that couldn’t be beat by any other manufacturer,” said HD Supply's Hammerschlag.

“The slow-close seat was a great add-on feature for our promotion and contributed to improved guest satisfaction,” American Standard’s Gilmore added. “With this seat, there is no more loud noise during the night when the seat drops, because it closes slowly and quietly. The slow-close feature also helps to eliminate broken seats that occur when a guest slams a regular seat, so it benefits management as well as guests.”

And with such a large order, the brand incorporated shipping flexibility into the sale, according to Gilmore. “Because the hotel is located in midtown Manhattan, they had no storage for 810 toilets,” he said. “So we offered to ship the order in five prepaid shipments to meet the hotel’s timeline.”

The combined impact of style, performance, shipping and pricing helped seal the deal for Crowne Plaza officials. “The general manager was in full agreement and recommended the replacement of every toilet with a Champion,” Curcio said.

Most importantly, the upscale hotel quickly began resolving its clogged toilet problem. Installation of the Champion shipments took place between July and December 2013. “After the first 150 toilets were installed, the toilets dropped off the hotel’s top 10 list of customer complaints,” Gilmore reported.

**Flush For Good initiative:** But the successful completion of this large order went beyond a good product at a good price, shipped on the hotel’s terms. In the end, the American Standard Flush For Good humanitarian initiative also played a key role.

Flush For Good aims to raise awareness of the global sanitation crisis and create solutions to help stop the spread of disease caused by inadequate sanitation facilities in developing countries. Worldwide, nearly 40 percent of the world population — that is 2.5 billion people — lack access to safe sanitation options.

In response to this international problem, American Standard invented the SaTo (pronounced SAH-toh, derived from "Safe Toilet") sanitary toilet pan in early 2013, in partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The goal was to create an easy-to-use, cost-effective sanitation solution for villages in Bangladesh, where conventional plumbing did not exist, and thus help control the spread of life-threatening disease. “Without intervention like our SaTo sanitary toilet pans, open pit latrines allowed for villagers to be in direct and indirect contact (through flying insects) with human waste and the diseases that it carried,” explained American Standard’s Gilmore.

With Flush For Good, American Standard has pledged to donate one SaTo to a developing country for each Champion toilet it sells in North America. By the end of 2017, the company expects to reach an estimated 5.5 million people with improved sanitation solutions and better quality of life in Bangladesh and Sub-Saharan Africa. American Standard’s distribution partners in Flush For Good include the anti-poverty

organization BRAC; Save the Children, the world's top independent charity for children in need; and other NGO's operating around the world.

“Through these groups and our customers’ purchases, our sanitary toilet pans go directly to people with the greatest need and at the highest risk,” Gilmore said. According to BRAC, “These pans are a low-tech solution to reduce disease transmission by keeping flying insects out of otherwise open latrine pits.”

“**Great cause**”: The Flush For Good program, in effect, gives American Standard customers like the Crowne Plaza the rare opportunity to support a life-saving cause. “We feel great that we helped support the Flush For Good program,” said Curcio.

In fact, the hotel’s management was so happy to be involved with Flush For Good, the Crowne Plaza requested a letter from American Standard to display at the hotel registration desk, so guests can feel good about it, too. “The letter describes our program and also explains that the new toilets will save 1.1 million gallons of water at the hotel each year,” Gilmore said.

“Aside from the great cause of Flush For Good, these toilets reduce water consumption and discharge without sacrificing performance,” said HD Supply's Hammerschlag. “We all win with the Champion, and everyone feels good at the end of the day knowing they were part of it.”

Gilmore agreed. “Every day, 2,000 people — mainly children — die from diseases caused by this lack of safe sanitation,” he said. “We’re doing our part to help reduce this terrible toll. With the support of customers like Crowne Plaza, we can donate more SaTo toilet pans and improve the quality of life for even more families in developing countries.”

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J.D. Power source in first paragraph: (SOURCE: <http://www.idpower.com/content/press-release/EjTNU11/2013-north-america-hotel-guest-satisfaction-index-study.htm>)

BRAC source noted in page 4: (SOURCE: <http://www.brac.net/node/1460#.UtAKKvbt5YQ>)