

## Kickstart: Plastic pipes take center stage



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### Plastic pipes take center stage

There's a lot of news about pipes this week.

To start things off, Ipex USA LLC owner Aliaxis SA, based in Belgium, is offering \$2 billion to buy rival Uponor Oyj, [PN's Catherine Kavanaugh writes](#). Both companies make high density polyethylene and cross-linked PE pipe.

Uponor officials say the offer undervalues the company, but in a conference call Aliaxis says with residential construction slowing in North America, Uponor should take advantage to become part of a more diverse firm.

But while corporate leaders and shareholders deal with M&A news, environmental groups are aiming to limit the use of PVC to replace lead service lines.

Beyond Plastics, Environmental Health Sciences and Plastic Pollution Coalition published a [56-page report](#), The Perils of PVC Plastic Pipe, on April 18 and will host a webinar on April 27. The groups maintain that PVC pipes can leach dangerous chemicals into household drinking supplies.

It's not the first time environmental groups have tried to get plastic pipes excluded from public projects. In [October](#) the Plastic Pollution Coalition launched a campaign urging federal and local officials not to replace lead lines with plastics.

For their part, pipe makers say plastic pipes have been used for more than 60 years with no health problems.



### **Good news and bad news from VDMA**

The German machinery manufacturing industry is beginning to pick up again after a lackluster 2022. Officials with the trade group [VDMA said in an April 17 news release](#) that production increased by 3.2 percent in the first two months of 2023 after ending the year with a growth rate of only 0.5 percent.

But that doesn't mean it's clear sailing. Orders for new equipment dropped in January and February by 17 percent vs. the same months in 2022, VDMA said.

Machinery manufacturers are currently working on an 11-month backlog of existing orders, however, so there is support for existing production.



### **How not to motivate workers**

This week, *Plastics News* has been honoring the [Best Places to Work](#) in the plastics industry. There are a lot of good lessons in these stories. Perhaps another lesson for company leaders this week, however, came in the form of what not to do.

MillerKnoll CEO Andi Owen went viral over the weekend when someone leaked a video of her discussing the company's financial status. The company — created through the merger of office furniture suppliers Herman Miller and Knoll — is well known for innovative design, including the use of plastics in the Aeron chair. But as office hours cut back in favor of home offices early during the COVID-19 pandemic, the furniture industry has struggled.

The leaked video may have been intended to boost employees and urge them to meet fiscal goals. Instead, as [Fortune notes](#), the subject of employee bonuses came up, with a general theme from workers asking how they could remain motivated with no bonuses. While her response begins with encouraging employees to "lead by example" and "be kind," Owen continues by saying they shouldn't think about what they would do without a bonus and to "leave pity city."

What really made the video go viral is that Owen herself — as many CEOs — receives much of her pay via a bonus. For the last fiscal year that bonus was worth \$3.9 million.

In a statement to *Fortune*, MillerKnoll said no decisions have been made yet regarding employee bonuses.