3-A SSI Alert on 3-A Symbol Infringement

McLEAN, VA – 3-A Sanitary Standards, Inc. (3-A SSI) announces this alert to call attention to the misuse of its trademarked 3-A Symbol. The 3-A Symbol is now being displayed by several Chinese companies without the authorization of 3-A SSI. The list of these companies is available on the 3-A SSI web site at this link to ‘Buyer Beware: False or Misleading Claims’.

The 3-A Symbol, shown on this masthead, is properly registered as the legal property of 3-A SSI by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. 3-A SSI licenses use of the 3-A Symbol to fabricators around the world to identify equipment that meets 3-A Sanitary Standards for design and fabrication. Voluntary use of the 3-A Symbol by dairy and food equipment fabricators helps assure processors that equipment meets sanitary standards, provides accepted criteria to equipment manufacturers for sanitary design, and establishes guidelines for uniform evaluation and compliance by sanitarians in the U.S. 3-A SSI currently licenses use of the 3-A Symbol to fabricators in the U.S. and 29 other countries, including many fabricators based in China.

The unauthorized use and display of the 3-A Symbol is misleading and potentially damaging to customers who select such products with the understanding the equipment has been verified to meet the criteria of a 3-A Sanitary Standard. 3-A SSI maintains a public database of authorized 3-A Symbol licensees to assist fabricators, processors and regulatory sanitarians. Information on 3-A Symbol licensees is important public information because it shows all equipment that has been found to conform to 3-A Sanitary Standards for dairy and food processing equipment and meet provisions of the 3-A Symbol program.

The 3-A Symbol has been in commercial use since 1956. Recognition and acceptance of the 3-A Symbol were enhanced in 2003 with the implementation of a new Third Party Verification (TPV) inspection requirement for use of the 3-A Symbol.
3-A SSI urges all interested parties to monitor the ‘Buyer Beware’ list on a periodic basis. Today literally hundreds of marketers offer food processing equipment on-line or through B2B web sites, and many state claims such as ‘meets 3A’, ‘conforms to 3A standards’, or the equipment may even include ‘3A’ in a model name or designation. Such references suggest the equipment meets the criteria for 3-A Symbol authorization. Unless the supplier is an authorized 3-A Symbol holder, the buyer is solely responsible for verifying whether the equipment meets the desired (and expected) sanitary design and fabrication criteria.

According to 3-A SSI Executive Director Tim Rugh, “All equipment is not created equal and even if it were, wouldn’t you want to verify it? Processors around the world know and trust the 3-A Symbol and that’s why they demand it for their food processing equipment. All equipment displaying the 3-A Symbol or making a claim of 3-A Symbol authorization must pass a comprehensive, independent Third Party Verification (TPV) inspection to assure it meets the sanitary design criteria in a 3-A Sanitary Standard.”

“3-A SSI often finds through web searches unsupported statements of conformance to 3-A Sanitary Standards, 3-A Certification, or authorization to use the 3-A Symbol, including some products such as ‘sanitary butterfly valves’, for which no 3-A Sanitary Standard exists. Unfortunately, the number of suspect or misleading claims made on-line and the legal expense for obtaining prompt corrections are beyond the resources of 3-A SSI,” Rugh said.

3-A SSI encourages those searching for food processing equipment that meets stringent criteria for sanitary design and fabrication to verify the equipment maintains authorization to display the 3-A Symbol. To find equipment built to 3-A Sanitary Standards, details on 3-A Sanitary Standards, and the 3-A Symbol, visit www.3-a.org.

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3-A Sanitary Standards, Inc. is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to enhance product safety for consumers of food, beverages, and pharmaceutical products through the development and use of 3-A Sanitary Standards and 3-A Accepted Practices. For more information, visit www.3-a.org.