



VALVE MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
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FISHER'S MIKE MASON TO LEAD ASSOCIATION IN 2010
Challenges abound, but new chairman sees slow growth ahead

Washington, DC (Dec. 22, 2009) –Valve Manufacturers Association Chairman Mike Mason knows he's taking over his responsibilities during a difficult time. But his attitude has been honed by more than 35 years in the business, most of it with one company—Fisher. He's currently executive vice president of the Fisher Division of Emerson Process Management.

Mason was elected as 2009/2010 chairman of VMA at its annual business meeting, held Oct. 3, 2009 in Palm Beach, FL. Also elected to leadership positions were Max Mitchell, president of Crane's Fluid Handling Group, who is now VMA's vice chairman, and Bruce Broxterman, president of Richards Industries, who is program chairman for the 2010 annual meeting.

Asked to address conditions in the valve industry, Mason says, "The current downturn has been as difficult as any I have seen in my time span." But one big advantage the industry and his company have today over years past is "our planning processes are better. We saw it coming sooner and took necessary actions," he explains.

He readily concurs that 2010 will still be tough year—filled with more challenging decisions. He believes "growth will come back, but it will be very gradual in most segments." Meanwhile, the challenges the industry face have not really changed because of the crisis: the main one today is how to attract skilled people and train them, Mason says. Externally, "the valve industry is not viewed as a particularly glamorous industry," he says. However, his background is testament to what the industry really is.

"Once someone gets on board and inside, it can be very exciting," he explains. "I've been here a long time and still find new challenges every day."

Mason discovered this reality after studying life sciences and mechanical engineering at the University of Minnesota and working for about a year in medical technology research. He got a mechanical engineering degree from the Institute of Technology and came to Fisher "because it was a more hands-on company," with channels for advancement and with more direct exposure to people than research could provide.

"In the 1970s, the process industry markets were growing and investing and, consequently, there were opportunities for people like me," he says. Once he got into the industry "I stayed for a lot of different reasons, but mostly because I have encountered so many great people," he says. Spreading the message of what opportunities and excitement exist in the industry is one of the main responsibilities of VMA, Mason says.

When Mason first entered the industry, he went into product development, manufacturing operations and the service business. He served in various capacities along the way with Fisher Controls and now Emerson Process Management's Fisher Division and says hooking up with Fisher in the first place was the most important step in that progression because that first step has led to all the others.

Currently, he is responsible for six global business units, order management and technology. That last area is one where he has seen great change in his time on board, he says. The most significant development has been "the value of the digital control systems and instrumentation on valves and in other field devices has created significant automation improvements," he says.

Meanwhile, new "communications technologies and protocol standards have moved process control capabilities into the future," he adds. But equally important are changes in valve design and improvements in materials of construction. Today, "valves last longer and are more corrosion resistant—despite more challenging operations conditions," he says.

In the past few years, however, one of the most significant changes in the industry has come from external pressures. "We have clearly seen a move by customers and regulatory agencies to increase the requirements and specifications on product design and manufacturing supply chain control," he says. The process industries have also become "very global," moving away from a North American-centric focus, he says.

As chair of the organization, Mason says his main mission is to develop ways to add value to what the association offers its members—enabling these companies to add value to what they offer their customers. To do that "we listen and direct our activities toward the membership based on the issues that are presented to the VMA Board," he says. Additionally, given all the major policies that are being developed in the United States, "I would like to make sure that the voice of our organization is being heard in Washington, DC and in the state capitols around the country," Mason says.

ABOUT THE VALVE MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Founded in 1938, the Washington, DC-based Valve Manufacturers Association of America (www.vma.org) represents nearly 100 North American manufacturers of valves, actuators and controls. Members account for approximately 80% of total industrial valve shipments out of U.S. and Canadian facilities. The North American valve industry supplies approximately 35% of worldwide valve demand, and VMA member companies employ 20,000 men and women in supporting jobs. VMA is the only organization exclusively serving U.S. and Canadian manufacturers of industrial valves, actuators and controls. Products manufactured by members are used in numerous industries, including: chemical processing; petroleum refining; oil and gas exploration, distribution and transmission; power generation; nuclear power; water/wastewater; commercial construction; and pulp and paper. VMA is also publisher of the quarterly Valve Magazine (www.valvemagazine.com), written for buyers, specifiers, users and distributors of industrial valves, actuators and controls.