

Q. Dear Dr. Galv: We recently changed our kettle. After the new kettle was packed with zinc slabs, our plant superintendent said the rest of the kettle needed to be filled with water, prior to turning on the burners. What's the deal ?

A. Filling a freshly packed kettle with water is an ancient religious rite performed by some galvanizers; similar to tossing virgins into volcanos. Dr. Galv has never been able to understand the need for this ritual. Some feel that the water, which fills in the voids between the slabs, gives a more even heat distribution during the initial heat-up period. However, the maximum heat (212°F) which could be achieved during this boil-down is well below any temperature that would prove harmful to the kettle. It's much more important to see that the zinc slabs are kept in intimate contact with the sidewalls to avoid localized overheating. In Dr. Galv's opinion it's better to save the water for a more noble purpose, like mixing it with scotch at the Kettle Meltdown Party.