

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

American Cast Iron Pipe Company v. AMERICAN AFC
Case No. D2026-2265

1. The Parties

The Complainant is American Cast Iron Pipe Company, United States of America (“United States”), represented by Burr & Forman LLP, United States.

The Respondent is AMERICAN AFC, United States, internally represented.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <american-afc.com> is registered with Bluehost Inc. (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on May 26, 2026. On May 27, 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On May 27, 2026, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the disputed domain name which differed from the named Respondent (Unknown) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on May 30, 2026, providing the registrant and contact information disclosed by the Registrar, and inviting the Complainant to submit an amendment to the Complaint. The Complainant filed an amended Complaint on June 5, 2026.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the amended Complaint satisfied the formal requirements of the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Policy” or “UDRP”), the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Rules”), and the WIPO Supplemental Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Supplemental Rules”).

In accordance with the Rules, paragraphs 2 and 4, the Center formally notified the Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on June 11, 2026. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was July 1, 2026. The Response was filed with the Center on June 29, 2026.

The Center appointed W. Scott Blackmer as the sole panelist in this matter on July 14, 2026. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. The Panel has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required by the Center to ensure compliance with the Rules, paragraph 7.

4. Factual Background

The Complainant is a Georgia, United States, corporation headquartered in Birmingham, Alabama, United States. It was founded in 1905 and manufactures ductile iron pipe, steel pipe, and spiral-welded pipe for the water industry and oil and gas industries, as well as flow control products including valves and fire hydrants. The latter are pictured on the Complainant's website at "www.american-usa.com", which is headed with the logo show below consisting of a stylized red capital letter "A" followed by the words "AMERICAN CAST IRON PIPE COMPANY":



The home page of the Complainant's website features videos of its manufacturing processes and products, and pages on the website offer photos and specifications of specific products, such as those in the "AMERICAN FLOW CONTROL" family including fire hydrants. The Complainant's website links to social media accounts and advertises positions at its facilities in Alabama, South Carolina, Texas, and Michigan. The website cites industry and community awards and service projects and refers to infrastructure projects in the United States and "around the globe".

The Complainant sells its products to customers under registered AMERICAN FLOW CONTROL and other AMERICAN-derivative marks (such as AMERICAN FAST GRIP, AMERICAN FASTITE, and AMERICAN LOK RING), AFC SEMPER, and a stylized "A" logo. Its United States trademark registrations include the following:

Mark	Reg. Number	Reg. Date	International Class
AMERICAN FLOW CONTROL (word)	1897455	June 6, 1995	11
AFC SEMPER (word)	6381334	June 8, 2021	9
	731366	May 15, 1962	6, 7, 9, 11, 17, 20, 21

The disputed domain name was created on March 24, 2022, and is registered to the Respondent, listed as AMERICAN AFC, showing a postal address in the State of Florida, United States and a Gmail contact email address.

The Response was filed on behalf of "American Fire Control LLC, a Wyoming limited liability company", with the same Orlando, Florida address given in the registration details for the disputed domain name. This is the entity referred to hereafter as the "Respondent". The internal authorized representative in this proceeding is R. G., and the Response is signed by J. S., who is not otherwise identified. The Complainant observes that the LinkedIn profile of R. G. shows that he is based in United Arab Emirates and serves as the "Regional Sales Manager" of the Respondent. The Panel notes that, according to the company's Operating Agreement submitted with the Response, R. G. is the CEO and sole Member of the Respondent.

The disputed domain name resolves to a website (the “Respondent’s website”) headed with the logo shown below consisting of a stylized white capital letter “A” in a red circle within a thin white circle before the words “AMERICAN FIRE CONTROL” over the tag line “QUALITY IS A PRIORITY”:



The Respondent’s website homepage displays a manufacturing video and photos of fire hydrants. The website refers to the Respondent’s office and manufacturing facilities in Orlando, Florida, United States and pictures various kinds of fire protection valves, including photos of fire hydrants stamped with the name “AMERICAN”. The “Contact Us” page gives contact information for “American Fire Control” at the same postal address given in the registration details for the disputed domain name in Orlando, Florida, as well as contact details in Canada, Spain, and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Pages on the website displaying parts specifications include the name “AMERICAN FIRE CONTROL CO., LLC”.

The Panel notes that while the online database of the Wyoming Secretary of State reflects the ongoing company registration of the Respondent with an address in Orlando, Florida, the online database of the Florida Division of Corporations does not list any company named “American Fire Control Co., LLC”, nor any company named “American Fire Control”, “American Fire Control LLC”, or “American Fire Control, LLC” established in Florida, Wyoming, or any other jurisdiction, that is registered to do business in the State of Florida.¹

Nevertheless, the “About Us” section of the landing page of the Respondent’s website claims this about the Respondent:

“At American Fire Control, we have a rich history rooted in a legacy that spans several generations, our company was established as a family-owned business in the state of Florida. Throughout the years, we have established ourselves as a premier manufacturer of fire protection valves and hydrants, catering primarily to clients in the United States.”

The page also claims that the Respondent constructed its own manufacturing and corporate headquarters in Orlando, Florida, alongside photos of two buildings. The Complainant points out that these photos do not correspond to the office building at the address given on the Respondent’s website or to the earlier Orlando address given in the initial incorporation documents in 2021, which corresponds to a shipping counter in a shopping mall.

The Response attaches several documents relating to its business:

- Articles of Organization of American Fire Control LLC, a limited liability company, filed with the Wyoming, United States, Secretary of State on January 21, 2021, listing an address in Orlando, Florida, United States as the mailing address;
- United States Federal Tax Identification Number Application Receipt and Number;
- Limited Liability Operating Agreement for American Fire Control LLC, dated January 27, 2021, showing R. G. as the sole Member of this member-managed limited liability company. An exhibit lists his title as CEO and his address is given in Saudi Arabia;

¹ Noting the general powers of a panel articulated in paragraphs 10 and 12 of the Rules, it is commonly accepted that a panel may undertake limited factual research into matters of public record, as the Panel has done in these proceedings. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Select UDRP Questions (“[WIPO Overview 3.1](#)”), section 4.8.

- Current business license of American AFC L.L.C-FZ, a limited liability company registered on December 30, 2024, in the Dubai Free Zone of the United Arab Emirates, naming R. M. I. N. G. as manager. The company's business is listed as trading in pumps, engines, valves, and spare parts, as well as construction equipment and machinery;
- Current Membership Certificate of American AFC L.L.C-FZ in the Dubai Chambers, showing its status as a licensed Free Zone Company and member since June 4, 2025;
- Current Dubai Free Zone, United Arab Emirates, business license of American Fire Control Middle East L.L.C-FZ, issued on September 19, 2023, also listing R. G. as manager and similar trading activities as well as retail sale of "new goods in specialized stores";
- UL Solutions Confirmation Letter to American Fire Control LLC dated January 15, 2026, indicating that the Respondent is registered with the Underwriters Laboratories database for clean-agent extinguishing systems, Models AFC-5112, AFC-227, AFC-P227;
- UL Solutions invoice for approximately USD 9,149 for the above UL listing, and payment receipt dated June 25, 2026, from a wire service in the United States to pay this invoice;
- FM Approvals Certificates of Conformity dated June 3, 2025, for the Respondent's fire extinguishing systems models AFC-227 and AFC-P227 and Certificates of Compliance issued March 23, 2023, for certain valves, pressure switches, and fire hydrants;
- FM Approvals Invoice to the Respondent dated March 12, 2026, for "private labeler listing fee" and funds transfer confirmation of payment of same for approximately USD 10,500 from a bank in the United States;
- ISO Quality Management System Assessment Certificates from ARS for design and manufacture of the Respondent's iron castings, fire hydrants, indicator posts, valves and components, dated December 5, 2023.

The Response also attaches evidence of "Approvals for Government Projects". These consist of pre-qualification documents or materials approvals for the Respondent to furnish fire hydrants or related equipment to contractors bidding for or participating in ten different construction projects in Saudi Arabia with government involvement from 2023-2026. These documents typically display the Respondent's name and Orlando, Florida address and refer to its UL and FM certifications. One of the materials approvals mentions that the fire hydrants are to be "locally manufactured", although with an allowance for the provision of an alternative hydrant while approval is secured for the locally manufactured goods. The Response does not indicate whether the Respondent secured any contracts from these materials approvals.

5. Parties' Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant contends that it has satisfied each of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name.

Notably, the Complainant contends that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the Complainant's registered AMERICAN FLOW CONTROL and AFC SEMPER word marks and suggests that this similarity is heightened because the Respondent "adopts the same naming convention" used with the Complainant's other AMERICAN-formative marks and the Complainant's domain name <american-usa.com>. Additionally, the Complainant claims common law rights in AFC alone as a mark, because the Complainant uses AFC extensively in its business, and the Complainant holds a trademark registration for a figurative mark consisting of a stylized "A" symbol.

The Complainant argues that the Respondent's use of a similar "A" logo on the Respondent's website adds to the likelihood of confusion with the Complainant.

The Complainant asserts that there is no relationship between the Complainant and the Respondent and that the Respondent is not making use of the disputed domain name for a bona fide commercial offering but rather illegitimately to imitate the Complainant with a disputed domain name that is "only slightly different from multiple of Complainant's marks", a similar logo and website layout with similar colors offering similar or identical products with respect to valves and fire protection equipment, and similar images and small red icons leading to downloadable files as on the Complainant's website, as well as the use of the "afc" acronym throughout (which in the Complainant's case stands for "American flow control"). The Complainant argues that the disputed domain name and the associated website are designed to create a false impression of association with the Complainant and as such cannot be considered part of a legitimate commercial offering.

The Complainant relies on the same analysis to charge the Respondent with bad faith under the Policy, using the disputed domain name "to attract consumers by confusion to a website with a similar design, layout, and color scheme and that purports to offer similar products to Complainant". The Complainant contends that the Respondent "knew or should have known of Complainant's rights to AFC and the extensive family of AMERICAN-formative marks" when the disputed domain name was registered in 2022, as the Complainant's AMERICAN FLOW CONTROL mark had been registered for almost thirty years, and the Complainant's AFC SEMPER mark had been registered for almost a year. The Complainant asserts that the "Respondent's incorporation of these well-known marks at the time of registering the Disputed Domain Name supports a finding of bad faith".

Further, the Complainant alleges that, "while the full nature of Respondent's activities is currently unknown to Complainant, it appears that Respondent is engaged in a fraudulent and/deceptive scheme". The Complainant questions whether the Respondent actually operates a manufacturing business as claimed. The Complainant states that images of products on the Respondent's website appear to be generated by artificial intelligence ("AI") and provides an example of one that appears actually to be a photo of one of the Complainant's fire hydrants. One of the Respondent's product specifications sheets is also numbered the same as one of the Complainant's, "A-3100".

The Complainant points to other anomalies that suggest deception:

"One indicator [of deception] is the number of statements on Respondent's website that are objectively verifiable as false. For example, Respondent states that it is a generations-old, 'family owned' business with a long and storied history. In fact, Respondent was formed less than five years ago in Wyoming by an online service offering business formation and is not registered with the State of Florida (where it allegedly has a manufacturing facility).

[...] As another example, Respondent has photographs of office buildings on its website that purport to be Respondent's offices. Yet Respondent's prior address corresponds to a 'Goin' Postal' location in a strip mall, and its current office corresponds to a large office building in Orlando, Florida that is not similar in appearance to the building pictured on Respondent's website (which appears to be AI-generated).

[...] Respondent also purports to have a manufacturing facility in the United States. However, Complainant has been in this industry for decades and is acutely aware of the United-States based manufacturers who manufacture the types of products sold by Complainant. Respondent is not one of them. Further, Complainant has identified two individuals connected to Respondent (through LinkedIn), and both of those individuals are located in the UAE, not the United States."

B. Respondent

The Respondent contends that the Complainant has not satisfied all three of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name.

The Respondent contends that the disputed domain name is not likely to engender confusion because the Parties are in different markets: “The Complainant’s core business centers on manufacturing cast iron, ductile iron, and steel piping infrastructure. In contrast, the Respondent has utilized the disputed domain name in good faith since 2021 exclusively to market and manufacture fire protection and clean agent fire suppression systems.” The Respondent observes that the Complainant does not market a clean agent fire suppression system under the designation “AFC” as the Respondent does; the Complainant uses “AFC” to brand flow control valve products, not fire control products. Moreover, the Parties operate in “different locations”, as evidenced by the Respondent’s business licenses in the United Arab Emirates and government approvals in Saudi Arabia.

The Respondent asserts that the disputed domain name was not meant to target the Complainant’s marks, as the name derives from the geographic term “America” and the acronym “afc”, short for “American fire control”, as used in the Respondent’s company names and its product names such as “AFC-227”, which have been listed with the appropriate industry standards bodies UL and FM. The Respondent cites multiple examples of third parties that also independently use the acronym “afc” in connection with valves and flow control products, to support the conclusion that the acronym is not exclusively associated with the Complainant. Examples can be found at “www.afcmalaysia.com”, “www.afc-valve.com”, “www.afcvalves.eu”, and “www.buyafcvalves.com”. The Respondent questions the Complainant’s claims concerning the fame of its marks and its nationwide offerings, as these are not supported by specific evidence in the record.

The Respondent denies imitating the Complainant’s logo or website. The Respondent points out that the Complainant’s capital “A” logo replaces the crossbar in the “A” with the cross-section of a pipe, appropriately referencing the Complainant’s core business in producing iron and steel pipe, while the Respondent’s logo is simply a capital letter “A” for “American”. Both use the color red on their websites, but the Respondent observes that this is common for businesses such as the Respondent’s that deal with fire protection. The Respondent denies selling “knockoff” or competing versions of the Complainant’s products.

Replying to the Complainant’s charges of deceptive content on the Respondent’s website, the Response concedes that the “images and descriptions on the ‘About Us’ page are illustrative in nature and intended to convey business development and corporate presence, not to represent a specific verified architectural location. The use of stock, conceptual, or non-exact imagery is common in corporate marketing and does not establish any misrepresentation, bad faith, or intent to confuse consumers. [...] The use of illustrative or AI-generated images on a website is a common and permissible practice for branding and presentation purposes, particularly for early stage or marketing-focused websites”. The Respondent challenges the assertion that its website includes an image of one of the Complainant’s fire hydrants, as “dry barrel hydrants manufactured by different companies around the world commonly share a substantially similar appearance”.

The Respondent asserts that website features criticized as imitative by the Complainant are simply common to business websites, such as pages labelled “About Us”, “Mission”, “Core Values”, “Vision”, “Identity”, “Customer Service”, “Product Training”, and “Warranty”. The Respondent states that it is also not uncommon to have linked or downloadable data sheets with specifications. The Respondent asserts that the “A-3100” data sheet identified by the Complainant describes a valve system that is not labelled “AFC” and does not reproduce any of the Complainant’s marks.

The Respondent does not expressly deny that it lacks physical offices or manufacturing facilities in the State of Florida (or, indeed, in the United States), remarking that its use of a commercial mail receiving or shared business service address is “common” and that businesses “may operate under

alternate names, DBAs, or through entities registered in other jurisdictions while still conducting legitimate commercial activity in Florida or elsewhere”. The Response does not state where it manufactures or obtains the products it advertises. The Respondent notes that it has successfully transferred the renewal fees for its UL and FM certifications through a bank account in the United States. The Respondent argues that “[t]he absence of a listing in the Florida Secretary of State database is not determinative of whether the entity exists or operates under a trade name”.

The Respondent argues that it operates a legitimate business and registered the disputed domain name in good faith “to mirror the Respondent’s trade name (American Fire Control) and its certified product lines AFC-227 Fire Suppression System and without any intent to target the Complainant, its trademark, its business, or its customers”. The Respondent argues that it legitimately operates in a different business from the Complainant’s “primary product lines” and that the Complainant has not produced evidence that the Respondent attempted to solicit or divert customers from the Complainant through bad faith conduct such as fraud or impersonation.

6. Discussion and Findings

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

It is well accepted that the first element functions primarily as a standing requirement. The standing (or threshold) test for confusing similarity involves a reasoned but relatively straightforward comparison between the Complainant’s trademark and the disputed domain name.

[WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.7.

The Complainant has shown rights in respect of a trademark or service mark (the registered AMERICAN FLOW CONTROL and AFC SEMPER word marks) for the purposes of the Policy.

[WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.2.1.

The Panel does not find that the Complainant has submitted a sufficient record to establish unregistered trademark or service mark rights in AFC alone as a word mark for the purposes of the Policy. This requires substantial evidence such as proof of sales, marketing, and industry, media, and consumer recognition demonstrating acquired distinctiveness (or “secondary meaning”) associating the mark with the Complainant’s good or services. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.3.

The registered marks in combination are recognizable within the disputed domain name. The disputed domain name includes the leading terms (“american” and “afc”, respectively) from the two marks. “afc” is also an acronym of the Complainant’s AMERICAN FLOW CONTROL mark and is used as such in the mark AFC SEMPER and also separately on the Complainant’s website. Accordingly, the Panel finds that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the marks for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.7.

The Panel finds the first element of the Policy has been established.

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy provides a list of circumstances in which the Respondent may demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in a disputed domain name.

Although the overall burden of proof in UDRP proceedings is on the complainant, panels have recognized that proving that a respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in a domain name may result in the difficult task of “proving a negative”, requiring information that is often primarily within the knowledge or control of the respondent. As such, where a complainant makes out a prima facie case that the respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests, the burden of production on this element shifts to the respondent to come forward with relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the domain name (although the burden of proof always remains on the complainant). If

the respondent fails to come forward with such relevant evidence, the complainant is deemed to have satisfied the second element. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 2.1.

The Panel finds that, before notice to the Respondent of the dispute, the Respondent used or made demonstrable preparations to use the disputed domain name in connection with a bona fide offering of goods or services. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 2.2.

It is undisputed that the Respondent, before notice of this dispute, formed a Wyoming company and two United Arab Emirates companies with similar names, used the disputed domain name to publish the Respondent's website, paid some USD 20,000 to list fire control products with relevant standards bodies, and went through the process of getting approvals to supply fire protection equipment in ten construction projects in the Saudi Arabia between 2023 and 2026, with a number of different contractors. The record does not show whether the Respondent has actually signed any contracts or produced and delivered any equipment, but on the face of it, the Respondent has a fully built-out website and has engaged in at least "demonstrable preparations" to use the disputed domain name in connection with a bona fide offering of goods or services.

Thus, the Panel finds the second element of the Policy has not been established. This finding would be undermined, however, if the Panel found, as the Complainant implies, that the Respondent chose its business and product names, as well as the disputed domain name, in a deliberate effort to exploit the Complainant's reputation. That could not be considered a bona fide commercial offering for Policy purposes. This possibility is more fully addressed below in the discussion of bad faith.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

The Panel notes that, for the purposes of paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy, paragraph 4(b) of the Policy establishes circumstances, in particular, but without limitation, that, if found by the Panel to be present, shall be evidence of the registration and use of a domain name in bad faith. Paragraph 4(b)(iv) concerns the intentional creation of a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's mark to attract Internet users to another site for commercial gain. This requires first establishing the likelihood that the Respondent was aware of the Complainant's marks and meant to exploit them, which the Complainant infers because its marks are "well-known" and because the disputed domain name and the Respondent's website content are imitative and "deceptive".

The Respondent does not expressly deny prior awareness of the Complainant but argues that "[t]he Complainant has not provided any evidence demonstrating that the Respondent had knowledge of the Complainant or its alleged trademark rights at the time of registration". It is, however, possible to assess the probability of prior knowledge from circumstances surrounding the Complainant's use of the marks and the Respondent's use of the disputed domain name. The Panel notes that the mark AMERICAN FLOW CONTROL had been in use for decades by March 2022, but the leading element of the mark found in the disputed domain name, "American", is a common geographical term not distinctive to the Complainant. The mark AFC SEMPER was much more recent, registered less than a year before the domain name registration, and it does not appear to be used to brand any of the Complainant's fire hydrants or other fire protection products (the Complainant markets fire hydrants under other marks, such as AMERICAN-DARLING, WATEROUS, SEQUOIA, and STORZ). The Complainant has not established that AFC SEMPER was widely known in 2022 or relevant to the fire control industry, or that a string combining "american" and "afc" would necessarily be associated with fire control products produced by the Complainant, such that the Respondent likely would choose such a string for the disputed domain name to exploit the Complainant's reputation.

Paragraph 4(b) of the Policy sets out a list of non-exhaustive circumstances that may indicate that a domain name was registered and used in bad faith, but other circumstances may be relevant in assessing whether a respondent's registration and use of a domain name is in bad faith.

[WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 3.2.1.

The Panel finds deceptive content in the Respondent's website content, particularly representing that the Respondent is a long-established Florida company with offices and manufacturing facilities in Florida, when there is no evidence that this is the case and the Respondent is not even registered to do business in the State of Florida. The Respondent clearly sought to appear to Middle Eastern clients to be a larger, more established, more "American" company, starting with the name and brand. It is clear, however, that the Respondent is established as a business entity in Wyoming, with related entities in United Arab Emirates, and has a working mail drop in Florida and a banking facility in the United States. Possibly there is little more so far to the business beyond the website, but the Respondent presumably produced or acquired samples of some kind to obtain the UL, FM, and ARS certifications attached to the Response. The Respondent argues that the features that are similar in the two Parties' websites are in fact common to business websites, not imitative of the Complainant, and that the Complainant has not proven that the website image claimed to be of one of the Complainant's fire hydrants is in fact attributable to the Complainant. The evidence of "copying" is equivocal on this record. There is no evidence of actual fraud on customers, while there is what appears to be documentary evidence of approvals for the Respondent to participate in Saudi Arabian construction projects with several different contractors. Thus, on this record, the Panel cannot find persuasive evidence of bad faith for Policy purposes. Further factual inquiry into the Respondent's activities and possible trademark infringement or unfair or deceptive trade practices are beyond the scope of this UDRP proceeding.

The evidence in the case file as presented does not indicate that the Respondent's aim in registering the disputed domain name was to profit from or exploit the Complainant's trademarks.

Accordingly, the Panel finds the third element of the Policy has not been established. Based on this factual analysis, the Panel also confirms its finding that the second Policy element has not been established.

7. Decision

For the foregoing reasons, the Complaint is denied.

/W. Scott Blackmer/

W. Scott Blackmer

Sole Panelist

Date: July 27, 2026