



ProEconomy Limited

Press Release:

Legionella danger as Department of Health issues ‘unfair’ guidelines for water safety treatment.

Changes to Department of Health guidelines for water treatment in NHS properties threaten public health, increase costs dramatically for cash-strapped NHS Trusts and create unfair market conditions for more effective new water safety treatments.

Bedfordshire-based water systems specialist ProEconomy has issued a formal challenge to the Department of Health after the government body changed its guidelines for NHS Trusts last November by recommending old-style, energy-intensive, temperature-based control systems as the ‘preferred strategy’ for NHS properties.

This not only puts pressure on NHS managers to adopt a temperature control regime but also puts alternative and more effective solutions at an immediate unfair market disadvantage.

“Legionella is a known killer,” says ProEconomy MD Nick Bedford. “We should be fairly supporting and developing every possible method to help protect the public from water-borne diseases like Legionella, E-coli and MRSA, especially in our hospitals where people are at their most vulnerable.”

“This move by the Department of Health is a blatant example of unfair preferential treatment. There is no scientific evidence at all to substantiate such a ‘preferred’ status”, he adds.

Inefficient, expensive and ineffective

Old-style temperature control techniques require all hot water outlets in an NHS system to reach at least 50 degrees celcius after running for one minute. This is expensive to install, time consuming to maintain, and wastes vast amounts of energy to heat the water at an ever-increasing cost to the NHS. What’s more, at this temperature the water is too hot to use and risks scalding, so expensive mixing valves must also be installed across the entire system.

Worst of all, it doesn’t work. Increasing scientific evidence shows it is not 100% effective, especially in the complex water systems of a hospital and other NHS sites where such bacteria can spread rapidly. This puts the health of the public at a direct risk.

Questions in the House

On May 22nd, South Bedfordshire MP Andrew Selous took the ProEconomy challenge to Parliament. In his statement to the House he stressed that the issue is not only ‘of great concern to the industry’, but also ‘represents a substantial risk to the public’.

To see the full Hansard coverage of the Parliamentary debate – and the unsatisfactory government response – visit www.theyworkforyou.com/whall/?id=2007-05-22a.413.0

Freedom of Information Act cited

The unwelcome amendment to the NHS guidelines was first issued in the Department of Health’s HTM04 document of November 2006. After three unsuccessful requests to see the background evidence to the Department of Health decision, ProEconomy had to resort to citing the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) to get an official response.

The Department then took almost 2 months to respond to subsequent requests for clarification.

No scientific evidence

Of the 31 scientific papers that were produced as a result of the FOI request, none supported the temperature control regime, three were against it, 21 did not mention it at all and seven were in favour of the alternative silver/copper ionisation alternative used by *ProEconomy*.

A US report from the University of Pittsburgh also stated that; 'contamination with Legionella will often recur within months' using temperature control. 'Furthermore,' added the report, 'it is tedious and labour intensive to implement.'

Why should the UK Department of Health now issue new guidelines that recommend a old-style and worryingly ineffective temperature-control technique without any supporting scientific evidence?

Safe and energy-efficient alternative

ProEconomy uses the *Orca* silver/copper ionisation technique to guarantee protection of water systems from any bacterial contamination. Developed by NASA for long-range space missions, the silver/copper ionisation technique is officially recognised by the World Health Organisation, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Health and Safety Executive and the Department of Health.

In this scientifically proven system, charged silver and copper ions released into the water rapidly destroy all bacterial contamination. It is chemical-free, non-toxic, non temperature-dependent and highly energy-efficient. In 14 years of business, there has never been a case of Legionnaires disease in any *ProEconomy* system.

The system is also far less expensive to install and run – a critical factor for pressured NHS budgets. For a 600-bed hospital, for example, a temperature-based regime would require 1200 mixing valves to prevent scalding at a cost of £180,000, a maintenance engineer at £35,000 a year, and an annual energy bill for heating the water to 60 degrees of £300,000. In this system the temperature levels are tested – but no tests are made for the presence of Legionella.

The alternative *Orca* ionisation system has a single installation cost of £80,000 and monthly testing for Legionella at £25,000 a year, and reduce energy costs by almost £70,000 a year. Across the 1,000 NHS hospitals this would amount to a saving for the taxpayer of £1 billion over 10 years, which could be used instead for essential front-line health services.

ProEconomy's *Orca* ionisation systems already protect public health at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital, HSBC Bank's 8,000-employee HQ in Canary Wharf, the European Space Agency in Holland and 40 other hospitals across the UK.

Still waiting for a decision

As a result of *ProEconomy's* proactive efforts, the Department of Health scheduled a new meeting on July 2nd to review the water systems guidelines again. Despite requests for information on the outcome of this meeting, *ProEconomy* is still waiting for a response.

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