

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

When you can't fit a water softener, or the customer doesn't want one, what is the best alternative for permanent protection from limescale? Kevin Johnson discusses

Dore than 60% of the UK suffers from hard water. This is caused by the water that feeds our homes and properties depositing calcium and magnesium that it has picked up when passing through chalk beds in the ground.

Once calcium and magnesium are heated, they start to form limescale deposits, appearing as hard crusty layers around kitchen taps, shower heads and the bottom of kettles.

Without any intervention, this will also lead to a build up of limescale, which stays within the home's hot water system and pipes, coating the heat exchanger, making the system less energy efficient and potentially shortening its working life.

All this costs money to sort out through replacement, servicing and maintenance. Staggeringly, the problem of hard water and limescale costs the UK an estimated £1 billion every year.

PREVENTION

Permanent Assisted Crystallisation systems, such as Monarch's Scaleout XP, help to ensure that limescale is effectively removed from the home while ensuring the pH stability and corrosion control in water. These systems use food grade glass coated media beads, which provide a surface that attracts minerals in the water and forms stable and harmless non-scale causing crystals that are then released back into the water.

As a result of this physical and permanent change, scale and magnesium can no longer form on surfaces including heating coils and elements, fittings or the inside of pipes.

The water then becomes both non-scale forming and descaling, offering benefits to the homeowner in terms of performance, cost savings and appliance efficiency.

Ultra-fine crystals, a by-product of this process, are reduced by the system's filter. However, in areas of high levels of water hardness, they may sometimes show themselves after the water has evaporated. This harmless residue can be wiped away before it accumulates as part of a household's normal cleaning.

PERMANENT PROTECTION

While a water softener is undoubtedly the best product to gain the full benefits of soft water and limescale protection, there is a sector of the market that are looking for an alternative to a water softener, as a softener is not always the best fit.

For too long, the choice was between a salt-based softener and conditioner, but the new types of permanent limescale protection system now give installers another option.

Every household in the UK has a form of stored water, be it tanks in the roof, the heat exchanger in a combi-boiler or an unvented/pressurised system. Certain limescale control



devices, such as electrolytic or magnetic devices, only offer a temporary relief to the effects of hard water, lasting only a few hours before reverting to scale-forming water. Permanent Assisted Crystallisation systems offer limescale prevention that maintains permanent whole house protection.

Permanent scale prevention and removal, a generally better feel to the water as compared to hard water, is all some customers are looking for in a lot of applications. These customers should understand that the treated water remains hard, but is a non-scale forming hard water, the next best thing.

The average 'hard water home' can spend between £200 and £240 a year to overcome the effects of hard water. The harder the water, the more cleaning agents and laundry detergents are required, while appliances' life expectancy is significantly reduced. The life expectancy of a heat exchanger is reduced by up to 80% with a hard water supply.

However you treat hard water, returning the customer's boiler and appliances to maximum efficiency and lowering running costs means a happy customer and a valuable sale.

GIVING ADVICE

There are over 13 million homes in hard water areas in the UK. Many of these households may not be aware of effective measures that can be taken against limescale and its effects.

This presents a perfect opportunity for an installer to provide professional advice to ensure that the customer gets the best permanent limescale protection for their home.

It could be recommended to customers while servicing and maintaining their boilers and hot water systems offering future household and appliance protection (when the damage that limescale causes is easily raised with them).

Most scale prevention systems are now compact and easy to install. More so than ever, they are available in a widening range of supplies from 15mm, 22mm and 28mm, by manufacturers who recognise the need to offer more flexibility for installers to meet the varying supply needs of their customers.

In addition to the opportunity to sell a useful and an appliance life lengthening product to your customers, it also provides the opportunity to schedule regular visits to homeowners to check and replace cartridges as well as servicing the boiler.

Finally, with the knowledge that customers' homes are protected permanently from limescale, installers can look at other service areas and products to help their customers enjoy a better lifestyle. Which, in a competitive market, is an invaluable way to build customer relationships and future business.

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