

Get soft with hard water

High efficiency water softeners are the sustainable solution to tackling the problems hard water causes, according to Kevin Johnson, Managing Director of Monarch Water.

Environmental issues have increasingly come under the spotlight in recent years, with consumers looking for sustainable solutions to household issues. It's therefore important that builders' merchants and their customers keep this in mind when recommending products to tackle issues such as hard water.

According to British Water, hard water is supplied to 60% of the UK, with areas in central, eastern and southern areas of England suffering most. Although consumers are able to find out the quality of their water from their local water supplier, installers can test the water quickly and easily for them with a simple kit.

This will allow them to open up discussions with homeowners about the sustainable solutions available to combat the damage that hard water

can cause around the home.

Water quality is rarely given any thought by consumers whether they are undertaking a home renovation project, such as installing a wet room, or investing in new equipment like a boiler. However, neglecting to manage water sufficiently in hard water areas can cost consumers and the environment dearly.

Hard water becomes more of an issue when heated in household appliances and equipment, this causes the minerals it contains to calcify to form limescale. An average size family in a hard water area of 300 ppm, will use water containing 70kg of limescale in just one year. If there are deposits in bathrooms and kitchens then there is definitely going to be limescale coating heating elements inside household equipment.

Of course, tide marks around the

bath, scum on sinks and scale coating taps and shower heads is unsightly and difficult to clean, but it's the hidden damage that is going to increase utility bills and homes' carbon footprint.

In fact, according to British Water, just 1.6mm (1/16") of scale build-up in heating systems will cause a 12% loss in heating efficiency inside equipment such as boilers, dishwashers, washing machines, showers, coffee machines and kettles.

Knowledge is power

Today's consumers remain concerned about the environment and also want to make savings, so it's important that they are made aware of the benefits that soft water offers.

By introducing the financial and practical advantages that sustainable water softeners offer will not only provide merchants and installers with another lucrative line of revenue, but enable them to provide great customer service too.

Whether installers are upgrading a boiler, fitting a new kitchen or simply installing new taps, water softening is an issue that can be brought up with consumers during any job.

Builders' merchants can increase their water softener sales by arming their installers with the facts and figures to help them increase uptake among their customers.

Therefore, it's important that staff know everything there is to know about the latest high efficiency water softeners and work towards them becoming an integral part of any task installers are carrying out.

Sustainable solution

Although water softeners have been around for over a century, relatively few hard water homes have one. With around just eight per cent of hard water homes enjoying the benefits of a water softener, there is plenty of profit potential up for grabs.

The latest generation of water softeners showcase the advances in technology and new innovations have led to increased efficiency and reduced consumption. For example, new and improved high efficiency water softeners now use 24% less water and 12% less salt per regeneration when compared to their predecessors.

Installing a water softener will not only protect consumers' homes from

limescale build-up 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, but remove any that's already accumulated.

This means that appliances will work more efficiently, making significant savings in running costs. It also means they are less likely to break down and their working life will be lengthened.

The big picture

Once considered a luxury, water softeners have now become an affordable necessity. Water softeners should be considered just as important as white goods within the home and it is merchants and installers that can help deliver this message home to consumers.

There are a number of benefits for consumers if they install a water softener in their home – from more energy efficient equipment and lower utility bills to less time spent cleaning scale and scum.

According to British Water, softened water can save 50% on washing powder and toilet soap consumption and similarly reduce the amount of shampoos, conditioners, and cleaning products needed. Additionally, softened water can help certain dry skin conditions such as eczema, make laundry brighter and produce sparkling results from dishwashers.

Although a water softener is constantly in operation, as there are few moving components their lifespan far exceeds other domestic appliances.

With savings of around £200 a year, in terms of lower utility bills and less cleaning chemicals needed, modern water softeners can produce a payback on investment very quickly.

Installation is quick and easy for installers, as the latest generation of water softeners are compatible with any boiler, making every hard water home a potential customer.

Additionally, if installers opt for water softeners that feature rapid-fit bypasses, fitting will be even quicker as they remove 80% of the equipment previously needed to install.

Highlighting the benefits of high efficiency water softeners to installers will not only enable merchants to increase their sales, but help installers to increase their profits, while protecting their customers' investment - making everyone a winner. ■

■ Salt blocks.

