

# SOFTENING THE BLOW

*High efficiency water softeners can save consumers money while boosting installers' profits, says Kevin Johnson, Managing Director at Monarch Water and Technical Director of the UK Water Treatment Association.*

**A**lthough rainwater is naturally soft, once it reaches the ground and filters through rocks it gathers minerals, such as magnesium and calcium.

Geology determines how hard or soft a water supply is. For example, limestone and chalk-rich regions like the South and East of England have the hardest water due to the high mineral content in the rocks.

Subsequently, water quality is a significant problem for 60% of the UK, with hard water areas exhibiting 300mg of calcium carbonate per litre compared to less than 100mg in soft water areas, according to Southern Water.

## HIDDEN DANGER

Water quality is rarely given any thought by consumers when undertaking a heating, ventilation, or plumbing project, but neglecting to treat hard water can have a detrimental effect on their homes and bank balance.

Every person living in a hard water area will undoubtedly recognise the telltale signs of limescale around their homes, but it's not just the unsightly scale and scum they need to be concerned about.

The average family living in a hard water area will use water containing 70kg of scale a year, with just 1.6mm of scale build-up on heating elements inside boilers and house hold appliances such as washing machines and dishwashers, reducing efficiency by 12%, according to British Water.

This not only means that appliances will cost more to run, because they have to first heat the scale before they can heat the water, but the lifespan of equipment will also be reduced. Additionally, equipment will be more prone to breakdowns and produce poorer results.

## SPREAD THE WORD

With just an estimated 8% of homes in hard water areas enjoying the benefits of high efficiency water softeners, it's clear that consumers have no idea how simple and affordable the solution is.

Whatever the job that's being carried out, tradespeople should impress the importance of water quality upon their customers. By testing their customers' water, discussing the costly problems that limescale causes, and introducing sustainable solutions to the problems, installers can increase their profits

while helping consumers protect their homes.

Modern water softeners will not only prevent any limescale build-up, but remove any existing deposits too. This will make equipment more efficient, which means lower utility bills. Dishwashers will produce sparkling results and washing machines will deliver softer laundry. What's more, consumers will use 50% less washing powder and soap and considerably reduce the amount of shampoo, conditioner, and cleaning products needed, according to British Water. Soft water is also thought to help dry skin conditions such as eczema.

## SUSTAINABLE SOFTENING

Regardless of the project, water softener installation should be an integral part of any quote. With few hard water homes taking advantage of the benefits that water softeners bring, this is a relatively untapped and profitable market being overlooked.

Today's consumers are looking for sustainable solutions to hard water issues, so it's important that installers are knowledgeable about what's on the market. The beauty of the latest generation of water softeners is that they are compatible with any boiler, so every hard water home has the opportunity to reap the benefits they offer.

Market-leading water softeners boast

increased efficiency, with some models using 12% less salt and 24% less water per regeneration than their previous counterparts. Not only that, but they are more compact – making them easier to site.

## MONEY TALK

The cost of installing a water softener may be a sticking point for some consumers, so it's important that installers encourage them to view them as an investment to protect their home. With estimated savings of around £200 annually, according to British Water, payback is relatively short.

The fact that water softeners have few moving parts means that their working life is typically longer than most other domestic appliances, so consumers will certainly get their money's worth.

It's not just the financial savings that installers and customers should focus on either, but the time savings they offer in terms of cleaning and scrubbing which can prove invaluable too.

By testing customers' water quality and highlighting the benefits that modern water softeners offer, installers can add a lucrative line of revenue to their business. Installers who buy water softeners from a merchant at a trade discount can offer a competitive supply and install quote, with a decent profit.

