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SAFETY IN THE HOME

Changes to Building Regulations are heavily focused on energy efficiency but safety in the home must not be compromised. In light of the changes to Building Regulations Part G, the Heating Helpline explains the importance of having your hot water system regularly maintained and serviced.

11 February 2010 For most domestic properties in the UK, hot water is heated and stored at temperatures of no less than 60C, necessary to guard against the build up of legionella bacteria. This means that most of the water in our homes is kept at a temperature that can cause scalding.

Accident figures show that nearly 600 people suffer the effects of a severe scald injury in the UK each year. Three-quarters of the victims are aged under five. The latest mortality figures show that 21 people died in the UK after contact with hot tap water. The tragic case of Rhinna

Hardie, a baby who died from scalding, shows how vulnerable children can be. She died due to a faulty thermostat, which might have been discovered in a routine service and maintenance check of the heating systems.

Although all new immersion heaters now have an overheat protection device built in, there are millions of homes in the UK at risk because they have old style units with no such protection.

In April 2010 Part G of the Building Regulations (sanitation, hot water safety and water efficiency) will be amended to ensure that baths in all new homes are fitted with protective devices to limit hot water temperatures. This is a welcome initiative to reduce future injuries from hot water scalding in the home but also highlights a wider problem.

Bob Towse, technical and safety consultant for the Heating Helpline, comments, “The Heating and Ventilating Contractors’ Association, along with other industry bodies, supports the need for legislation requiring ongoing maintenance of hot water systems to ensure they are retrospectively fitted with thermostatic mixing valves (TMVs) or other methods of controlling the temperature of the water that emerges from our taps.

“With TMVs, engineers are able to design systems that store water at relatively high temperatures but dispense it safely; in some countries such as Scotland, regulations governing TMVs and immersion heaters have been in place for some years and their experience shows that serious injuries can be reduced by as much as 50% by widely deploying anti-scald technology.

“TMVs can be part of shower fittings, fitted under baths and basins, or as a feature of exposed hot and cold water mixers.

“Already commonly used in showers, it has, however, proved harder to raise awareness of the need for TMVs in baths even though that is where most severe scald injuries happen.

“Families with children and elderly people are especially at risk and our advice to homeowners is to ask a reputable heating engineer to install TMVs to baths and in homes where older immersion heaters are fitted; the heating engineer will also be able to advise if there are other hot water outlets in the home that should have a TMV fitted”.

For more information on TMVs or to find a reputable heating engineer in your area, please contact the Heating Helpline on 0800 840 4069 or their website: www.heatinghelpline.org.uk.

Ends

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Note to Editors

Established in 1904, the HVCA is the premier organisation representing central heating contractors across the UK, and exists to promote fair dealing and the sound installation of heating systems.

HVCA members all undergo third-party inspection and assessment of their technical competence and commercial capability every three years. This process is carried out by an independent certification body with an established industry reputation.

HVCA members who undertake gas installations are registered with Gas Safe – the gas safety watchdog body – and are also members of TrustMark, the Government-endorsed scheme designed to direct customers towards reliable tradespeople.

HVCA operates the *Heating Helpline* (www.heatinghelpline.org.uk) to provide consumers with free, impartial advice on every aspect of home heating.

Caption for picture at www.nextstepmarketing.co.uk/press:

The Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association supports the need for legislation requiring on-going maintenance of hot water systems to ensure they are retrospectively fitted with thermostatic mixing valves (TMVs) or other methods of controlling the temperature of the water that emerges from our taps.