

IFEDA - Press release June 2017

Fire extinguisher water analysis provides crystal clear results

How clean and safe is the water? This is not a question we hear too often within the United Kingdom in modern times. However, it is this question which has during recent years become more and more of an issue to a particular section of the fire protection industry, the portable fire extinguisher market.

With the majority of liquid filled extinguishers now being manufactured outside the EU and filled with water obtained from local sources in the country of origin, including the Far East and Eastern Europe, concerns about possible water safety have been growing. These concerns are particularly being felt and voiced by Fire Extinguisher Service Technicians throughout the UK who work closely with the products daily.

With no data or testing analysis available to answer the concerns being raised by its members the Independent Fire Engineering & Distributors Association (IFEDA) commissioned the services of a company called Feedwater, independent water treatment specialists, to undertake laboratory testing and analysis of the water contained within fire extinguishers imported into the UK from several different global locations.

The process was started by IFEDA using mystery shopping procedures to purchase a selection of water based fire extinguishers currently distributed within the UK.

The fire extinguishers purchased represented a cross-section of the market from budget range extinguishers through to premium branded models. Water was then removed under controlled conditions and Feedwater proceeded to test each individual sample for a variety of identifiable organic compounds, including legionella, in addition to any pesticides or herbicides listed as being an environmental concern in the UK. A few of the samples were then subjected to deeper analysis for other contaminants such as toxic metals.

IFEDA are delighted to report that the results of this research and testing has provided data and results which clearly demonstrates that no problems exist with the water within these types of fire extinguishers. Some slightly elevated levels of lead were found in two samples; however, all were well inside any accepted safety levels, and organic compounds in the samples were very little; with none present at all in one sample.

IFEDA's National Chairman Colin Payne commented: "Due to the previous lack of any scientific information or data concerning this subject it was of vital importance that IFEDA undertook this research. There has been without doubt genuine concerns regarding possible health risks among the thousands of technicians who work with these products daily." He went on to add: "I am delighted to be able to re-assure not only IFEDA members, but also all those working within the fire protection industry, including servicing technicians and potential end-users, that there are no identifiable health risks from exposure to the water in fire extinguishers filled outside the UK."