

HN (NI) 2001/12

DATE: 10 August 2001

For Attention and Action by:
Chief Executive of each HSS Trust
General Manager/Chief Executive of each HSS Board
Chief Executive of each Agency



HEALTH ESTATES
ESTATE POLICY

NORTHERN
IRELAND
ADVERSE
INCIDENT
CENTRE

TITLE:

**Anaesthetic Breathing System Components:
Risk of Blockages**

MANUFACTURER/SUPPLIER

Various

PROBLEM

The Northern Ireland Adverse Incident Centre (NIAIC) continues to receive reports through the Medical Devices Agency (MDA) of blocked breathing system components. Blockage can lead to death or serious permanent injury.

DISTRIBUTION

This notice should be brought to the attention of all who need to know or be aware of it, including those listed below, in accordance with local procedures. This will include:

- Liaison Officers
- Risk Managers
- Health & Safety Officers/Advisors
- Device Managers
- Estates Managers
- Medical Directors
- Theatre Managers
- General Dental Practitioners
- Private Clinics
- Clinical Directors
- Nursing Directors
- Directors of Anaesthetics
- Adult & Paediatric Intensive Care Units
- Maternity Departments
- A&E Departments
- Special Care Baby Units
- Ambulance Services

Boards/Trusts should ensure that if appropriate, this information is passed to all persons having the responsibility for the premises registered under "THE REGISTERED HOMES (NI) ORDER 1992.

IMMEDIATE ACTION

Every component of the breathing system **MUST** be visually inspected and functionally checked for patency immediately before **EACH** patient use.

H A Z A R D

NOTICE



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BACKGROUND

NIAIC Safety Notice SN (NI) 2001/11: Anaesthetic Breathing System Components: Pre-use Checks” was issued on 13 March 2001. A copy of SN (NI) 2001/11 is provided in Annex A to this Notice. SN (NI) 2001/11 recommended that all breathing system components must be checked for patency before use and that the “Checklist for Anaesthetic Apparatus” produced by the Association of Anaesthetists should be followed for each and every patient. This publication was in response to manufacturing defects adversely affecting two patients.

There have now been further reports of occlusion in breathing systems due to the presence of foreign bodies, one resulting in the death of a patient. Users should exercise additional vigilance, as the possibility of deliberate tampering has not been ruled out at this stage.

Users and their managers should be aware that liability for any adverse incidents that may occur when devices are used outside the manufacturers’ instructions would almost certainly lie with their organisation.

The “**IMMEDIATE ACTION**” recommended above (page1) is fully endorsed by the Royal College of Anaesthetists and the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland.

ENQUIRIES

Enquires to the NIAIC should quote the reference number HN (NI) 2001/12 and be addressed to:

Northern Ireland Adverse Incident Centre (NIAIC)
Health Estates
Estate Policy
Stoney Road
Dundonald
Belfast BT16 1US

Marked for the attention of Mr Brian Godfrey

Tel: 02890 523714
Fax: 02890 523900
Email: brian.godfrey@dhsspsni.gov.uk

Brian Godfrey
NIAIC Manager

HOW TO REPORT ADVERSE INCIDENTS

Adverse Incidents relating to medical devices, non-medical equipment, plant and buildings should be reported to NIAIC as soon as possible. Advice on how to report is given in Safety Notice SN (NI) 2001/01. If you are in doubt about how to report incidents, please speak to your liaison officer or contact NIAIC using the telephone number provided.

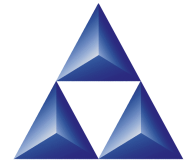
*Heath Estates is an Executive Agency of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Áisíneacht Feidhmeannach don Roinn Sláinte. Serbhístí Sóisialta agus Sábháilteacht Phoiblí*

Annex A

SN (NI) 2001/11

DATE: 13 March 2001

For Attention and Action by:
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Chief Executive of each Agency



HEALTH ESTATES
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NORTHERN
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TITLE:
**ANAESTHETIC BREATHING SYSTEM
COMPONENTS: PRE-USE CHECKS**

MANUFACTURER/SUPPLIER

Various

PROBLEM

Blockages and incorrent fittings of breathing system components can pose a serious risk to patients.

DISTRIBUTION

This notice should be brought to the attention of all who need to know or be aware of it, including those listed below, in accordance with local procedures. This will include:

- Liaison Officers
- Risk Managers
- Health & Safety Officers/Advisors
- Medical Directors
- Directors of Anesthetics
- Nursing Directors
- Medical, Nursing and Care Staff
- Ambulance Staff and Paramedics
- Special Care Baby Units
- Maternity Wards
- Operating Theatre Staff
- Accident & Emergency Departments
- General Medical Practitioners
- General Dental Practitioners
- Intensive Therapy Units (Adults/Paediatrics)

Boards/Trusts should ensure that if appropriate, this information is passed to all persons having the responsibility for the premises registered under "THE REGISTERED HOMES (NI) ORDER 1992.

ACTION

All breathing system components **must be** checked for patency and correct fitting before use. The checklist for anaesthetic apparatus produced by the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland (AAGBI) should be followed for each and every patient to ensure that blockages and incorrect fittings are detected.

SAFETY

NOTICE

BACKGROUND

There continues to be reports on incidents of blocked, poorly fitting or incorrectly assembled breathing system components in clinical use. Two recent incidents reported ineffective patient ventilation. It appears that users do not always check the patency and correct fitting of these systems as manufacturing defects are very rare. All users must be aware of this potential risk and it is vital to fully check every single breathing system component before use, as recommended by the AAGBI.



HEALTH ESTATES
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Stoney Road
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Brian Godfrey
NIAIC Manager

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