

HN (NI) 2001/15

DATE: 27 September 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 -
SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE**

MANUFACTURER/SUPPLIER

Various

PROBLEM

The Medical Devices Agency (MDA) has informed NIAIC that they continue to receive reports of foreign bodies in breathing system components. Blockage can lead to death or serious permanent injury.

This Notice reiterates and supplements the advice given in HN2001/12, published in August 2001.

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/Advisers
- Device Managers
- Estates Managers
- Medical Directors
- Theatre Managers
- General Dental Practitioners
- Private Clinics
- Clinical Governance Departments
- Clinical Directors
- Nursing Directors
- Directors of Anaesthetics
- Adult & Paediatric Intensive Care Unit
- Maternity Department
- A&E Departments
- Special Care Baby Units
- Ambulance Services
- Operating Department Practitioners

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.
- Breathing system components must be stored in such a way as to minimize the possible entry of extraneous components and foreign bodies. Where possible single use devices should remain in their original packaging until use. Reusable devices must be carefully stored and individually wrapped between use where appropriate.

**HAZARD
NOTICE**



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H A Z A R D

NOTICE

BACKGROUND

NIAIC Hazard Notice HN2001/12: 'Anaesthetic Breathing System Components: Risk of Blockages' was published in August 2001. That Notice recommended that all breathing system components **must** be visually inspected and functionally checked for patency immediately before **each** patient use. This reinforced the guidance given in the 'Checklist for Anaesthetic Apparatus' produced by the Association of Anaesthetists. This publication was in response to reports of occlusion in breathing systems due to the presence of foreign bodies, one resulting in the death of a patient.

Further reports have been received by MDA highlighting the additional need for careful storage of all components. Users must continue to exercise vigilance, as the possibility of deliberate tampering has not yet been ruled out.

The **IMMEDIATE ACTION** recommended above 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) 2001/15 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

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Fax: 02890 523900
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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) 2000/NIAIC. 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*