

Pipeline

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IS YOUR WATER MAKING YOUR BOILER SICK?



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy Fall! It's that time of year where the shorts and flip flops are in the rear view and it's time to make room for the light coats and pants. The leaves have not fully dropped yet but these cold mornings are a reminder that it's coming and fast.

I've never subscribed to what the Farmer's Almanac has to say because our local weather experts have a very difficult time predicting what's happening 48 hours from now never mind in 6 months. I don't blame them one bit as we live in a region that can be difficult to predict!

How can we be so certain that it's going to be as cold as they say? What about precipitation? All I know is that we can always be certain of at least one very cold day thus it's imperative that your boiler(s) is ready to go.

Since 1952 we have been getting boiler systems ready for the coldest winters. Whether we are installing a new first class system by our talented installation technicians or simply getting your existing system troubleshoot and online, we are here for you any day, night or time. I personally make that promise to you.

With the surge of high efficiency condensing boilers comes the responsibility of water quality: internally and externally. Water quality, along with specific boiler preventive maintenance, is paramount in ensuring the health of a condensing boiler regardless of heat exchanger material. As an owner, operator or engineer everyone must be cognizant of a system's needs. Unfortunately there is a stigmatism that if a hydronic system is operating on natural gas then system maintenance and water treatment is unnecessary. That assumption could render premature boiler failure during the coldest winter day.

Condensing boilers have changed the way we provide heat to our homes, apartment buildings, and even large commercial/industrial facilities. Regardless of its application, all condensing boilers are supposed to condense, thus the name. That doesn't always occur but that is a topic for another time. When boiler return water temperature drops below 135°F (dew point) and the supply vs. return water temperature is greater than 20°F condensing occurs, therefore water will exit the bottom of the boiler's flue collector and into a building drain. Unfortunately condensate is extremely acidic and contains a PH level between 3 and 5 (think orange juice). Pouring any type of acidic product down a drain is quite corrosive and the piping will deteriorate over time.

In order to mitigate the acidity, a condensate neutralizing tank must be installed in the condensate line prior to entering the drain. These condensate neutralizers are relatively inexpensive as they are constructed of PVC and marble chips. The marble acts as the agent which brings the PH back up to a neutral level (7). Please note the marble must be inspected a few times a year and will need replacement.

On the flip side of external water quality and even more critical is internal water condition. A condensing boiler can and will fail prematurely without the necessary precautions taken from appropriate water treatment. Whether it's hard water which causes scaling or soft water which is corrosive, it must be checked periodically. It doesn't stop at hard or soft water either!

'President' cont.

Please keep in mind that in the event you unfortunately experience a major failure we have a full fleet of mobile boilers that range in all sizes. Steam, hot water, domestic hot water we have you covered. Need one that fires oil and natural gas? We have those too. Our mobile boilers are continuously inspected and upgraded to ensure utmost reliability and longevity. We are proud to continue to be New England's mobile boiler leader!

Finally, one thing that we continuously see being over looked is service and maintenance. Just recently we had two clients lose boilers due to lack of maintenance. Obviously not the best time of year for this to happen.

One of the customers actually owned a high efficiency condensing boiler. Natural gas boilers are sometimes viewed under the "set it and forget it" mantra. True, they lack as much maintenance as their oil counterpart however every manufacturer's operations and maintenance manual comes with implicit maintenance checks. That's why they call it an O&M, right?

We all perform routine maintenance checks on our cars and trucks or we would break down at the least opportune time. A boiler/burner system is definitely no different.

Please enjoy this issue of the Pipeline newsletter. It is our honor and privilege to share it with you. Thank you.

Geoffrey C. Wilkinson, Jr.

Geoffrey C. Wilkinson, Jr.
President

NEW ENGLAND'S MOBILE BOILER LEADER



"The service techs did such a great job out at Boston Symphony Orchestra. This was a very challenging event as BSO gave us a parking spot to put the portable boiler in, which was a good distance from the piping they needed to tie into, but that was no problem! The crew ran a 4" main line hard pipe steam supply around the parking lot to a point that we could transition to the boiler hose connections and everything has worked out great. BSO has been without our street steam for 3 weeks now but they still have cooling and hot water thanks to you guys. Great Job!"

Steve Giordano, Veolia North America
Boston, MA

"I wish to extend our sincere thanks to The Wilkinson Companies and especially Dave Roche (Fleet Manager) for a very seamless project in providing the temporary boiler, guidance on its installation and start up services. It was a complete surprise that we would need a temporary boiler as the owner felt the new gas service from the utility would be installed in time. The Wilkinson companies was quick to respond with the required permits and availability of the boiler and we trust the service will be the same if needed."

Matt Alberty , Enterprise Equipment
Weymouth, MA

"We had a difficult situation where we had a Wilkinson 50 hp temporary boiler that could not keep up with the demand of a hospital in New Hampshire. I called them and within an hour and a half there was a technician on site adjusting the boiler to keep the hospital up and running. The next day they sent up another boiler as a backup. What a pleasure it has been to have The Wilkinson Companies working for us"

Dave Kervin, Youngblood, Co
Haverhill, MA

Water Treatment cont.

Within a heating system are a lot of dissimilar metals. Ferrous metals wouldn't harm a cast iron boiler system but in a condensing boiler it is toxic and the reason for an early demise. Dissimilar metals create iron oxide (turns into sludge) which finds its way into the base of the boiler and is extremely difficult to remove. This decreases the boilers overall efficiency as it must work harder to overcome the built up sediment.

Condensing boiler passages are quite small thus it doesn't take long to collect and eventually harden. It's not just the boilers that are failing due to poor water but also circulator pumps, seals and zone valves which are getting hung up. As we enter into a time period where some of the original condensing boilers are starting to fail, it behooves your organization from not performing system water quality tests. Contact us today to assist with your water quality needs.

Tip: Drain some boiler water into a peanut butter jar and let it sit for a day. Then grab an extremely strong magnet and drag it against the jar base. If the water is clear then you are free of iron oxides but if it's a bit dark and the black pieces follow the magnet then you know that water treatment is needed.



WILKINSON SERVICE TEAM
FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS

"The Wilkinson Companies have been performing our maintenance and emergency service for our three 600 hp boilers here at MGH for the past 10 years. We have since added our other boilers around campus, and we are very happy with the service provided. They are only a phone call away, and they administer prompt and professional technicians and support."

Scott Fitzgerald, Mass General Hospital
Boston, MA

"We have been using The Wilkinson Companies at all our Massachusetts locations for several years now, performing professional scheduled & emergency service on our equipment. Some of our steam boilers serve manufacturing spaces and are critical to product development. We appreciate the 24 hour coverage and quick response that we get when we place an emergency service call during and after normal business hours. I set up a preventive maintenance program which includes quarterly and annual preventive maintenance visits on all our hot water & steam boilers from the 9 hp Parker Boilers to our 300 hp Cleaver Brooks and have been very happy with the results."

Joe Fazio, Millipore Corporation
Billerica, MA

