



Organisations focused on their carbon footprint are being advised to consider the green potential of a switch from bottled to mains-fed water supply

Watering down carbon emissions

2008 has not been a good year so far for the bottled water industry. MP Graham Springer called for a stop to the quarter of a million bottles of water purchased by the House of Commons; Environment Minister Phil Woolas condemned the bottled water industry on national TV, saying it bordered on being 'morally unacceptable'; and Cabinet Secretary Gus O'Donnell sent a tap water policy order to all government departments, which will come into effect by the summer.

New evidence has now emerged that replacing bottled water coolers with mains fed systems in the workplace could reduce UK businesses carbon footprint by a staggering 68,593 tonnes per annum, representing a 70 per cent emissions saving. The finding comes from a carbon footprint analysis carried out by Premier Watercoolers, a leading provider of plumbed in water coolers to businesses across the UK.

Using industry statistics on the UK water cooler marketplace and Defra's greenhouse gas conversion factors, Premier has assessed the environmental impact of the bottled and mains fed water coolers in terms of efficiency of water cooler equipment, transportation and servicing of equipment.

Taking all these elements into account the analysis conducted by Premier reveals that CO₂ emissions for the UK bottled market amounted to circa 98,000 tonnes compared to around 29,000 tonnes if all users of

bottled water coolers converted to mains-fed systems. Transportation is the most significant contributor to carbon emissions of bottled water coolers - there are some 10.5 million deliveries of bottled water each year across more than 400,000 sites in the UK generating some 46,730 tonnes of CO₂ emissions, according to the analysis.

To help companies measure the environmental impact associated with the provision of drinking water in the workplace, Premier Watercoolers has launched the industry's first-ever free Carbon Emissions Assessment scheme. The Assessment measures a company's carbon emissions from its existing water coolers across single or multiple sites. It covers equipment efficiency, transportation, servicing trips, as well as taking into account any energy saving devices used in conjunction with business operating hours.

Companies that sign up to the scheme receive a Carbon Assessment Savings Certificate, which can be used to count towards an organisation's continual improvement programme as part of ISO14001.

Phil Langley, managing director of Premier Watercoolers and the brainchild of the pioneering carbon assessment tool, says: "There is no doubt that mains fed drinking water is more environmentally friendly, but the analysis we have undertaken reveals the scale of carbon emissions from the bottled water industry and the positive environmental impact that the UK plc market could make by getting their water 'on tap', via plumbed in water dispensers."

"Interestingly, our analysis proves that there are also significant differences in carbon emissions between mains fed water dispensers. This is due to varying equipment efficiencies and frequency of servicing. Companies, therefore, need to be aware of these factors when looking to specify a mains fed system."

Action Plan to Slash CO₂ Emissions

Phil Langley presents a seven-point action plan for companies to reduce the level of carbon emissions from their water coolers, including:

1. Convert from bottled to mains-fed water



coolers: If all organisations made the switch, carbon emissions associated with transportation of bottled water would be reduced by a staggering 46,730 tonnes of Co₂ a year.

2. Invest in the latest mains-fed water cooler technology: The number of servicing trips could be halved every year by ensuring your water cooler provider has the latest dispensing, hygiene and chilling technology.

3. Select energy efficient equipment: This reduces energy consumption in terms of chilling, carbonating or heating water. If all water coolers were highly efficient in terms of energy consumption levels, carbon emissions would be reduced by a further 17,635 tonnes per year.

4. Recycle any disposable plastic cups or use glasses or sports bottles: Schemes such as 'Save-a-Cup' will collect plastic cups for recycling for a nominal annual fee.

5. Switch from a kettle to a hot water dispenser: Kettles are often overfilled and boiled many times a day, becoming continually less energy efficient in hard water areas due to scale build up. Hot water dispensers are more efficient in terms of heating the water and maintaining the heat, ready for dispensing on demand. In our carbon footprint analysis of water coolers, the widespread use of kettles in the workplace were not taken into account, so this presents further opportunities for businesses to reduce their CO₂ emissions.

6. Take advantage of Premier's free carbon emission assessment.



Contact details

To take advantage of Premier Watercoolers' free carbon emission assessment, call: 0800 1955740. Alternatively, visit: www.watercoolers.co.uk