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Reading Eagle: Susan L. Angstadt | Timothy Keeler, ProAsys owner, with one of the company's trucks.

Healthy water, drinking or otherwise

By David A. Kostival

Tuesday October 13, 2015 12:01 AM

When talking about water in public buildings, we usually think about potable, or drinking, water.

And we trust that the local municipality or water authority is treating that water to ensure our safety.

But what about the water we don't see?

Boilers and cooling towers in public buildings for the heating and cooling or refrigeration systems hold considerable amounts of water.

Although not yet mandated by any law, the quality of that water also should be monitored for proper chemistry.

ProAsys Inc., Shillington, is a Berks County business that offers industrial water treatment programs for boilers, cooling systems and industrial wastewater.

Timothy Keeler, Wyomissing, has served as ProAsys president since 2012. It was founded by his grandfather J. Frederick Keeler in 1953.

Treat water

ProAsys Inc.

President: Timothy Keeler

Founded: 1953 as The Keeler Co.

Founder: J. Frederick Keeler

Employees: 18

Location: 318 Hendel St., Shillington

Phone: 610-775-1505

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"Our clients range from manufacturers and food processors to hospitals to colleges and universities," Keeler said. "We provide services and chemicals to treat water in heating and cooling equipment."

Why is that important?

Keeler explained that having such a program will prevent impurities in the water to minimize water usage and allow equipment to function more efficiently.

The result can extend the life of equipment and provide financial savings through reduced energy costs.

"The chemistry can prevent mineral deposits on heat-transfer service equipment," Keeler said. "It prevents scaling and corrosion, and extends the life of the equipment."

If a facility has steam boilers and cooling towers, "it is in the best interest to have this service because having to replace equipment is expensive," he said.

Office buildings not onboard

Keeler said hospitals, universities and hotels almost always have an industrial water treatment program, but he has found that general office buildings aren't always on board.

"The benefit to the end user is that this saves on energy and water usage," Keeler said.

John Buckley Jr., production plant manager at Berks Packing, said the service provided by ProAsys increases efficiency of the equipment at Berks Packing.

"Treating the water in the boilers and the refrigeration units gives more longevity to those critical pieces of equipment," Buckley said. "Because it is a local company, ProAsys gives great customer service."

Buckley said Keeler is often on-site to assist technicians in the testing of the chemicals in the water.

"He keeps a close eye and monitors the water usage," Buckley said.

Test water systems

Technicians visit typical clients periodically to test each water system to make sure the proper water chemistry is present in the systems. Adjustments then are made on an as-needed basis to the chemical feed to the water.

ProAsys provides services to all of eastern Pennsylvania, extending west to State College and also to portions of New Jersey.

The cost for the service is specific to each building, depending on the systems and the size.

While water treatment is almost always an economic concern, there is one other benefit that might be of special interest to the public.

Health concerns

There were legitimate health concerns earlier this year when outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease occurred in New York, California and Illinois.

or 866-472-7151

Website:

www.proasysinc.com

About Legionnaire's disease

The disease known as legionellosis is caused by Legionella bacteria.

Legionella got its name from a 1976 outbreak, when people attending a Philadelphia convention of the American Legion suffered an unknown illness.

It is estimated that 8,000 to 18,000 people are hospitalized with Legionnaire's disease each year in the U.S.

Legionella are found growing in warm water. The bacteria cannot be transmitted from person to person.

People get Legionnaires' disease or Pontiac fever by breathing in a mist or vapor contaminated with the bacteria. A milder infection, also caused by Legionella bacteria, is called Pontiac fever. The symptoms of Pontiac fever are similar to those of Legionnaires' disease and usually last for two to five days. Pontiac fever is different from Legionnaires' disease because the patient does not have pneumonia.

Keeping the bacteria out of water is the key to prevention.

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2. Gunman kills himself after barricading himself inside District Township house, police say
3. Arrest made in Fleetwood bar robbery
4. Berks County commissioner candidates outline their goals at *Reading Eagle* forum
5. For state trooper pursuing cold case, relief mixes with frustration
6. Mike Drago: Expansion to six classes not popular with western Pennsylvania schools
7. U.S. senator bemoans end of subsidized student loans
8. Letter: McMahon: 'I support McHale for mayor'
9. Reading Area Water Authority chairman, city mayoral candidates clash over water rates
10. Pennsylvania Senate OKs limits on union dues, PAC collection

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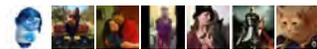
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Those outbreaks drew attention to Legionella, the bacteria that grow in an environment of warm water, especially hot tubs, cooling towers, hot water tanks, large plumbing systems and decorative fountains.

Legionella got its name from a 1976 outbreak in Philadelphia at an Americal Legion convention where attendees contracted a type of pneumonia from a lung infection caused by the bacteria.

Keeler said Legionella is a hot topic in his industry right now.

"Recently, a lot of colleges who are customers were asking us to make sure the water systems were in shape before the students came back," Keeler said.

Most affected people have pneumonia because the bacteria thrive in the lungs.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



ProAsys has taken a leading role in making educational presentations to members of the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineers.

Keeler said the new ASHRAE Standard 188 has established risk management requirements for building water systems.

"We give the facts of how the bacteria grows, and give our clients the information of what a water management plan looks like," Keeler said. "ASHRAE Standard 188 minimizes Legionella risks, and there are a number of pieces in place for building owners to follow."

Keeler said that although many buildings have water management systems in place, there are a large number that have undertreated water.

Because of the need, Keeler said the growth plan for his company is to continue to work within the existing footprint of the territory and add additional salespeople as needed over the next few years.

Contact David A. Kostival: money@readingeagle.com.



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