

Safety Action Notice

Reference: SAN2604

Issued: 02 September 2026

Electric Instant Hot Water Boilers – Potential for Overheating and Fire (All Makes and Models).

Summary

This notice highlights the potential for overheating and fire risk associated with electric instant hot water boilers installed across the NHS Wales Estate. Over the past 12 months, three confirmed fire incidents have been reported within NHS Wales, with a further similar incident reported via the Hospital Fire Officers' network by an NHS England Trust. There have also been three incidents reported within one health board in Scotland.

Investigations identified localised overheating around internal electrical components, particularly the power-switch and internal wiring, with moisture or steam ingress from defective seals, missing fixings, or deteriorated gaskets considered likely contributing factors. A small number of older units inspected following these incidents showed heat damage to cable insulation and required remedial replacement.

This notice applies to all electric instant hot water boilers, regardless of manufacturer. It aims to ensure NHS organisations take action to inspect, maintain, and manage these units, minimising the risk of electrical overheating and fire, safeguarding patients, staff, and visitors.

Action

Preventive Action

Estates departments and other suitable personnel should develop a complete and up-to-date asset register for all electric instant hot water boilers, including details of unit location, type, age, and servicing history. Organisations should verify that all units are included within their Planned Preventive Maintenance (PPM) programmes and that no units have fallen out of scheduled inspections. Any gaps in maintenance or inspection should be rectified as a priority.

Inspection and Maintenance

All electric instant hot water boilers should be visually inspected for signs of deterioration, checked to ensure they are securely mounted, and confirmed to be operating normally. Servicing and inspection should be carried out by appropriately trained personnel in line with current manufacturer recommendations.

Life-Cycle Management and Replacement

NHS organisations should review the age and life-cycle status of all units, prioritising legacy boilers beyond their intended service life. Older or damaged units should be inspected and, where necessary, scheduled for replacement in line with manufacturer guidance. Any unit showing signs of overheating, wiring degradation, or moisture damage should be isolated immediately, assessed by competent personnel, and reported to the manufacturer for guidance. Where equipment is being installed or replaced, a risk assessment should be undertaken to determine whether additional protection is required, such as RCD/RCBO and/or AFDD protection.

Record Keeping and Assurance

All inspection findings, maintenance activities, remedial works, and manufacturer communications should be documented and retained. Accurate records support ongoing assurance and help identify recurring issues. Local fire safety reporting and escalation procedures should be reinforced to ensure concerns are communicated promptly to the NHS organisation's fire safety team.

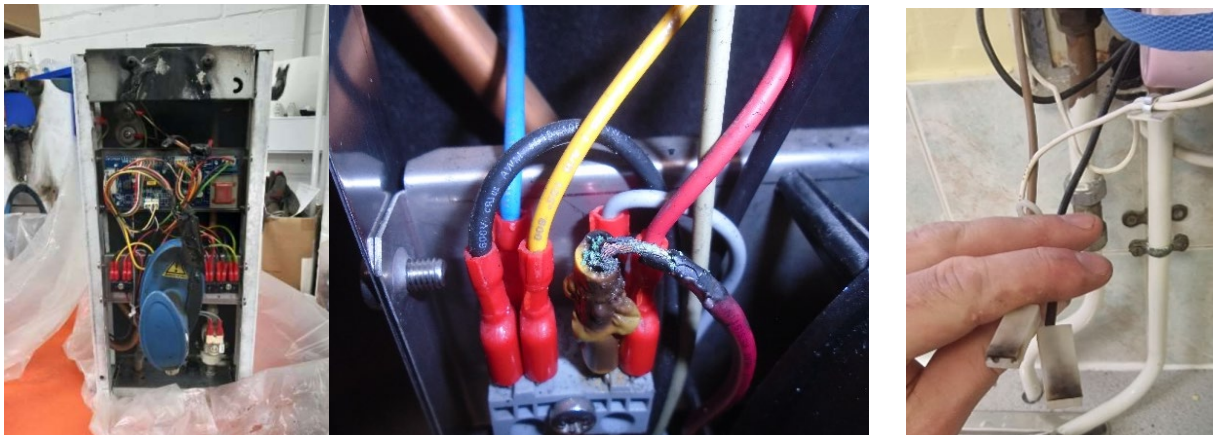
Equipment details

This notice applies to all electric instant hot water boilers across NHS estates, irrespective of manufacturer, model, or installation date. These units are commonly installed within inpatient kitchen areas and as well around the estate to provide on-demand hot water.

The boilers operate with internal electrical heating elements and contain switches, wiring, and control components susceptible to overheating if exposed to moisture ingress, defective seals, or mechanical faults. Both older and newer units are included, as incidents have been reported across a range of designs and installation dates.

Background Information

Three confirmed fire incidents within NHS Wales have highlighted the risks associated with electric instant hot water boilers, primarily localised overheating around the power-switch and internal wiring, often associated with moisture or steam ingress. Some older units inspected following these incidents showed heat damage to cable insulation which required remedial replacement. These events emphasise the importance of immediate, consistent action to manage, maintain, and replace boilers where necessary to mitigate fire risks.



Photographic Evidence - Examples of different incidents across NHS Wales sites and various boiler units. Provided for illustrative purposes only.

Enquiries - manufacturer or supplier contact details

For further information regarding safe use, maintenance, or replacement, NHS organisations should contact the equipment manufacturer or supplier directly. Manufacturer and supplier contact details can be sourced from product documentation, service agreements, or the organisation's estates department.

Distribution of this alert

This alert has been distributed to Incidents and Alerts Safety Officers (IASOs) in all health boards and local authorities in Scotland. **If you wish to share the alert informally with colleagues**, please inform them that they may also receive it through the formal local distribution. The local distribution may include additional actions tailored to address local needs, agreed upon by the IASO in consultation with department heads and professional leads.

You can contact your local IASO to discuss this alert and who it should be distributed to. If you do not know who your IASO is, you can find their contact details here: [Find your Incidents and Alerts Safety Officer](#).

Suggested onward distribution (may not include all affected departments)

Risk Management
Operational Estates

Supplies / Procurement
Fire Safety Advisors

Capital Planning & Design
PFI / PPP Staff

Information about IRIC

Incident Reporting & Investigation Centre (IRIC), Facilities Division, NHS Scotland Assure Public Services Delivery Scotland, Tel: 0131 275 7575, email: nss.irc@nhs.scot

Accessibility: Please contact us using the above details if you are blind or have a sight impairment and would like to request this alert in a more suitable format.

IRIC remit: general information about adverse incidents, safety alerts and IRIC's role can be found in [DL\(2024\)32](#), *Safety of Health, Social Care, Estates and Facilities Equipment: NHS Board and Local Authority Responsibilities*, issued 16 December 2024.

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