

WARNING TO CARAVAN AND PARK HOME OWNERS AND SITE MANAGERS
RISK OF DRINKING WATER CONTAMINATION FROM USING
ANTIFREEZE IN DOMESTIC PLUMBING SYSTEMS.

Owners and site managers of caravan holiday homes (static caravans) and park homes or lodges are warned not to use antifreeze solution to “winterize” their plumbing systems because it might harm people’s health and is illegal under the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations and Scottish Water Byelaws.

Use of antifreeze is being promoted as an alternative to draining down plumbing systems to avoid damage by freezing in unoccupied properties during the winter. The method uses a dosing pump connected to the water supply pipe to add antifreeze solution to the whole plumbing system of the individual caravan or park home, including the drinking water taps. The solution is drawn through to the taps and appliances by flushing them to waste. The whole plumbing system remains filled with antifreeze over the winter and in spring the system is cleared by flushing the outlets to waste with fresh water.

Antifreeze solutions are not intended to be consumed and anyone who accidentally took water for drinking or cooking from a tap on the dosed system risks serious harm to health. People who unknowingly swallowed antifreeze in other circumstances have suffered blindness, deafness and kidney damage requiring a kidney transplant.

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations or Scottish Water Byelaws apply to all premises in the UK, including parks and caravans, which use public water supplies. Following legal advice, Water Suppliers consider that

Regulation 3/Byelaw 3 makes it illegal to add a contaminant such as antifreeze to the drinking water system.

Through the British Holiday & Home Parks Association WRAS has advised park operators that it is illegal for the dosing device to be attached to the plumbing system, even temporarily, or to use it to introduce antifreeze throughout the plumbing systems of caravan holiday homes and park homes. This applies regardless of the use of any form of backflow prevention and even if the method is modified so that the water supply pipe is temporarily disconnected while the chemicals are added.

Water Suppliers who enforce the Regulations or Byelaws are alert to this risk and may check on parks to see if they are breaking the law by using this method.

The person who installs this equipment and anyone who uses it could both face fines of up to £1000 for each time it was used and would have a criminal record, affecting for example their employment opportunities, credit rating and travel abroad. Of greater concern is the risk of harming someone who drank the dosed water. Park operators might be sued for damages if this happened. Liability insurance does not usually cover the insured for the consequences of criminal acts they carry out.

NOTE: Protection of central heating system closed circuits

Water Suppliers accept the practice of protecting the **closed circuit** heating system of a caravan holiday home or park home by addition of antifreeze through the connection intended for topping-up water. This is allowed because the closed circuit is separated from the rest of the plumbing system, and as the contents are not intended to be used for drinking purposes, they are not required to be wholesome water.

In line with Government Guidance, the use of a temporary filling loop to top up a dosed closed circuit is also accepted, provided the filling loop has a double check valve to prevent backflow whilst it is connected and the filling loop is removed immediately after use.

This warning is issued by WRAS on behalf of the UK Water Suppliers. For further information, please contact WRAS Technical Advice Service on 01495 248454 or by email to info@wras.co.uk.