

WHAT YOU THINK
YOU KNOW ABOUT
WATER SOFTENERS...
AND THEN, THE TRUTH



More than 60% of homes in the UK are supplied with hard water and suffer the effects of limescale on a daily basis. However, this can be almost completely eradicated if a water softener is fitted. Whether you already provide water softener installation as a service, you haven't given them much thought or you have heard stories which have put you off learning about them, it helps to have a solid understanding of them so you can give your customer all the details they might need when they're considering buying one from you.

A SEVEN-POINT GUIDE TO HARD WATER:

- Hard water is created when extra calcium and magnesium is picked up by fresh rainwater as it travels through the ground
- Whether a home is supplied with hard water depends on where its water source originates and how the water has travelled to the home, including how many chalk beds it has passed through
- When calcium and magnesium are heated, they deposit themselves as limescale – which is why you're more likely to find chalky residue around hot taps rather than cold
- Additional issues for homeowners arising from hard water include cloudy drinking water, dull cutlery and glasses, white spotting on clothes and limescale build up in appliances like washing machines and kettles
- A water softener is a trouble-free way of resolving this issue, because they capture the calcium and magnesium from the water as it flows through the unit
- A water softener can be fitted in any home and will provide soft water to a family for as long as the unit works
- The average lifespan of a water softener is between 15 and 18 years – though those that are well looked after can last as long as 30 years!

Water softeners have been around for years and have been developed to become very compact units that are considerate of the environment too. But a lack available information on what they are and how they work means that over the years, a number of falsely constructed myths have been allowed to go unchallenged. If you believe them, you might've been put off recommending a water softener to a customer. So let's set the record straight.

Here's our BEAMA Myth Buster – a list of all the things you might think you know about water softeners, and then... the truth.

<p>Water softeners don't work well with new boilers and central heating systems</p>	<p>A water softener can be fitted in most homes, and with any boiler. A water softener installation must comply with BS 14743 which states that there must be a bypass valve which enables the softening unit to be isolated from the mains, while maintaining water supply to the end user.</p> <p>This simply means that the bypass valve can be used when filling or topping up a heating system, ensuring that radiators can be filled with water that has not been artificially softened.</p>
<p>Water softener units are difficult to install</p>	<p>A water softener unit joins the water system where the home's stop cock is located. In a similar way to fitting a washing machine, a qualified plumber is needed to ensure a first-class job is completed. A unit can be fitted in as little as 3-4 hours and guidance is available from each manufacturer or WRAS.</p>
<p>Water softeners make drinking water taste salty</p>	<p>Inside a water softener unit, water passes through a container which houses thousands of tiny beads, which attract and retain the calcium and magnesium from the hard water. Every so often, these beads need cleaning. This is done automatically by the unit, which sends a weak solution made up of salt and water through the container to wash the beads clean. The unit then automatically flushes this dirty water down the drain, leaving the beads clean and ready to begin another cycle. So, salt doesn't soften water itself, but instead it cleans the unit out.</p> <p>This means that no salt enters the water supply, however it is possible that a tiny amount may be left over from the cleaning process.</p>
<p>Water softener units take up large amounts of space in a home</p>	<p>Manufacturers of water softeners have worked hard to reduce the overall size of the units, without impacting on their efficiency. Just like boilers have become more compact and neater, so have water softener units. The water softeners also free up space that may previously have been taken up with copious amounts of cleaning products. This reduction in cleaning products also makes water softeners a better environmental solution for your customers.</p>

Hard water has a detrimental effect on anything it comes into contact with – as plumbers working in hard water areas, you'll see its effects every day. But, if you need any more convincing, check out what other installers and homeowners have to say about water softeners by downloading one of our case studies.

For more information about water softeners, visit one of BEAMA's recommended manufacturers who can recommend the best unit for your job.