

Dear Santa, and another thing...

Mike Creamer pens a Christmas wish-list on behalf of the industry

I don't know about you, but this year seems to have passed with the speed of rocket-propelled space boots.

It was in many respects a momentous year. The arrival of the F-Gas Regulation, and the creation of a European-wide competence qualification, ushered in a new era with all refrigerant handlers going back to school. For those of us with an interest in training, that fact alone has contributed to an extraordinary year.

Alongside this, the world – for a moment at least – teetered on the brink of economic Armageddon, with cash machines reportedly just 24-hours from closing down. Who would have predicted at the beginning of the year that, by the summer, most of the UK's major banks would effectively be in state ownership?

It is as nearly as absurd as the idea that the primary cause of global warming, carbon dioxide, could be compressed into cylinders and used as a refrigerant. But that, of course, is exactly what is now happening on high streets the length and breadth of the country.

As the industry prepares to hang up its rocket propelled space-boots for Christmas and enjoy the seasonal lull, we present on behalf of the trade our wish list to Santa...

Number one, we need a way of telling instantly – just by looking – exactly how much energy cooling plant is wasting. Not using, note, but wasting. Every single item of refrigeration and air conditioning equipment should, by law, be fitted with a universal energy waste-o-meter – that shows what percentage of optimum it is currently operating at, and how much the underperformance is costing the end user a day, a month, a year. It would also diagnose what must be done to improve performance to the optimum level.

In the age of advanced self-diagnostics and skyrocketing energy costs, this is almost do-able.

Second, we need a product that cost-effectively captures every milli-watt of waste energy floating around our buildings, cities and factories and converts it into clean, high efficiency electricity. It would tap geothermal, solar, ambient, atmospheric and waste process energy presently being allowed to dissipate into space, collect it, upgrade it and convert it to usable power. It must do this without adding so much as a molecule of toxic by-products to the environment.

Word reaches us that Santa's Elves are already beavering on this one, and that we may see some very interesting developments over the next couple of years.

Three, we need a means of ensuring everyone pays everyone on time. It is criminal to see perfectly good companies driven to the point of collapse due to cash-flow problems arising from late payment. It is a subject we have aired on this page before. However, the practice of intentional late payment continues and must stop. It is effectively theft, and it is often the big companies who are the worst offenders. We have

it within our power to change this shameful practice, and it must start at the top.

Four, we need a moratorium on new regulations and bureaucratic burdens for companies. Business is hard enough without the constant deluge of new paperwork, legislation and interference that descends on us from “on high”.

Just how much administration are we supposed to undertake on behalf of the government? We collect tax from employees, National Insurance Contributions from employees, VAT from our customers, produce statistics on sales to EU and non-EU countries, CIS Contributions and... the list goes on.

We have constant changes to Employment Law, Equal Opportunities, Health and Safety, Financial and Tax legislation and more. Like many people in business, I have simply had enough. Santa, we have to bring it to an end. It would be a sensational present.

Five, we need a new family of refrigerants with excellent thermodynamic properties, that do not harm the environment, are safe to use, universally available – and cost virtually nothing. And, while you’re at it, when released at the end of their useful life they enter the atmosphere and help counteract global warming and repair the hole in the ozone layer.

Six, a small one, but nonetheless a godsend, I wish for self-purging refrigerant lines, especially those long ones containing liquid.

Seven, I wish for a lightning fast recovery machine. They exist, but cost about the same as the Hadron Collider. An inexpensive machine within the reach of every Service Technician would be a winner.

Eight, I wish that train fares to London were the same as those in Sydney. Portsmouth to London costs about £50.00 per 170 miles. A 250-mile journey from Sydney to anywhere costs about £8.00!

Nine, we need self-brazing copper tube!

Ten, I wish my tools weighed around 80 per cent less than they do now.

Finally, and potentially most transformational of all, I wish there was a fast lane on all roads for the exclusive use of Refrigeration Engineers. Now, that really would be a gift worth celebrating.

A happy and relaxing Yule to one and all.

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