

The illusion of clean air



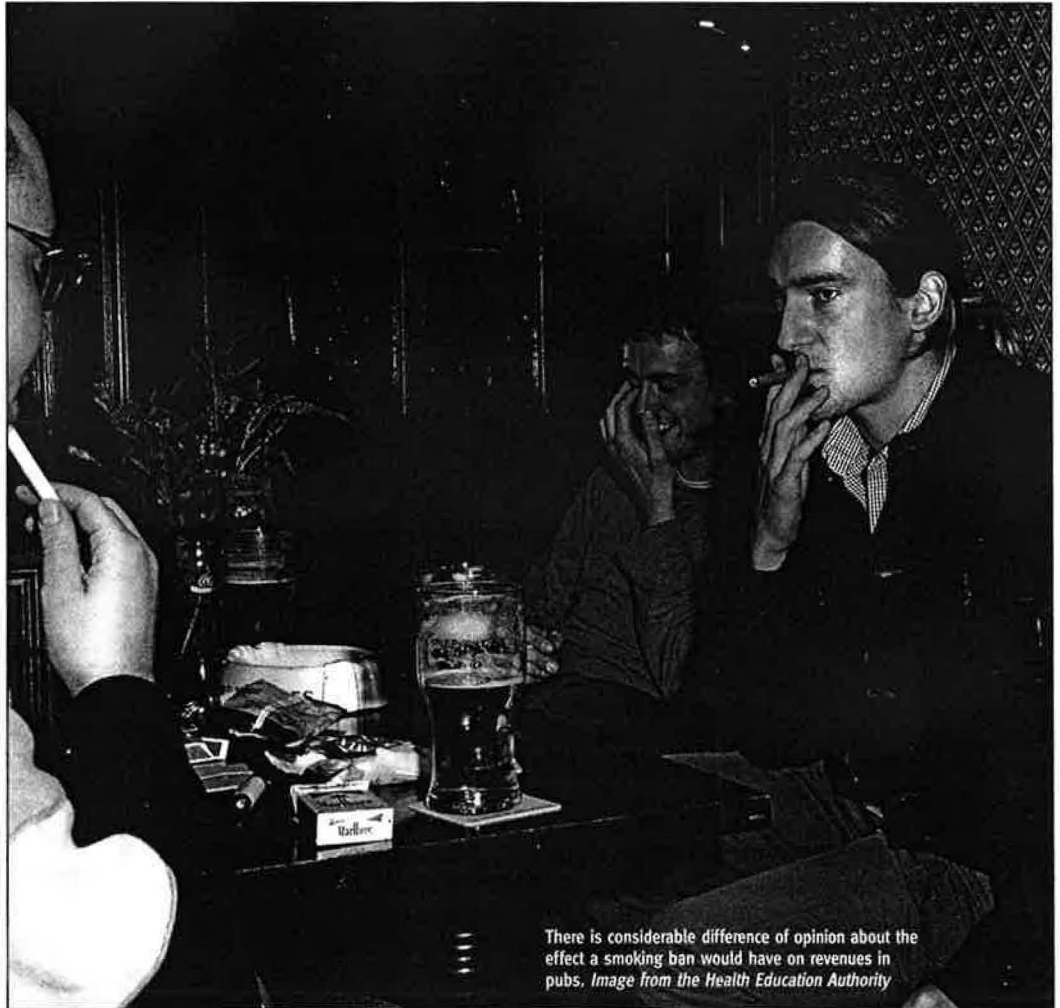
Being cool is largely a pre-occupation of the young, even though some of the older generation - who should know better - still try their best to compete. Keeping cool is another thing entirely and, with global warming making things hotter for us, those restaurants, pubs and clubs which take steps to keep their clientele cool, soon see the benefits in increased numbers and higher takings.

Very often, however, keeping cool simply means cooling the air, moving it around with ceiling fans or even leaving a door open somewhere to provide a draught. Cooling the air can also create the illusion of clean air circulating, but this is all it is - an illusion.

Even where air conditioning plant is installed, it only cools the air and doesn't clean it as well. Ideally, a combination of air conditioning and air cleaning provides the best solution in any environment, especially where staff are exposed to the dangers of passive smoking.

The dangers of passive smoking are considerable, especially to waiting and bar staff and others working for hours in close proximity to customers, many of whom will be happily puffing away on cigarettes.

If the staff are smokers, then the dangers are compounded if they are also exposed to concentrated bouts of passive smoking. Recent research results have shown, however, that passive smoking is also a major health hazard for non-



There is considerable difference of opinion about the effect a smoking ban would have on revenues in pubs. Image from the Health Education Authority

The health debate over the effects of passive smoking is the biggest single issue facing the ventilation industry. **Bud Marconi** believes that it highlights the need for a positive attitude towards clean air policies.

smokers as well. Even more alarming is the assertion that the effects of passive smoking on non-smokers - such as the increased risk of heart attacks or the exacerbation of asthma - can be very sudden, compared with the same effects on active smokers which can take much longer to develop.

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) calculates, for example, that there are at least 2 million incidences of illness in the UK every year caused by passive smoking. This includes thousands of premature deaths from heart attacks and several hundred from lung cancer in

non-smokers caused by breathing other people's smoke.

Much of the information available tends to concentrate on situations where passive smoking affects either children through their parents, or non-smoking spouses and their smoking partners. It seems logical, therefore, to assume that in many instances waiting and bar staff can, in fact, suffer increased danger as they are likely to be in a more heavily smoke-laden atmosphere for longer periods of time.

Inevitably, we are faced with the argument that non-smoking bars, pubs and clubs would lose

money. Until the experiment is tried in a representative number of outlets in the UK, the effect of a policy like this cannot be guessed at - in the United States, however, a study shows that a smoking ban in bars has no adverse effect on trade.

(This finding is disputed by the Atmosphere Improves Results campaign - See HAC, May 1998 page 6)

The study examined bars in seven locations in California which had smoking bans, and compared these with bars that had no smoking ban. Sales tax data from 1991 revealed no economic impact as a result of the smoking bans. The authors of the study (SA Glantz and RA Smith/American Journal of Public Health - 4.11.97) also updated an earlier study examining restaurants, and again showed no economic impact.

With only 28% of UK adults smoking, compared with 80% who drink, the claim by Clive Bates, Director of ASH, that:

"What seems to happen is that non-smokers who were previously put off by clouds of smoke would replace the smokers that decide to stay away," could also be applied to the UK.

In contrast, although not comparing like with like, smokers' champion FOREST highlights the case of the NHS Trust, which was forced to reconsider its policy when revenues dropped following a smoking ban in its staff canteens. This led to increased fire risks through staff finding other places to smoke, and the natural resentment felt by the staff was exacerbated by the ban covering non-smoking when in uniform.

The ultimate injustice to employees in the leisure industries is that employers insist they do not smoke in bars and clubs when serving customers, yet expect them to work in smoke laden atmospheres for hours on end.

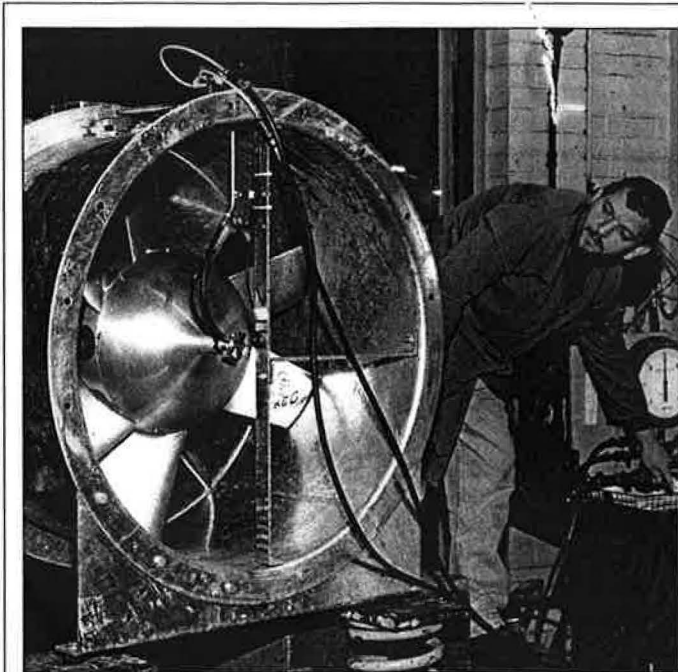
Manufacturers of air cleaning equipment have a vested interest in this whole subject, as any smoky atmosphere cries out for products which work in tandem with an air conditioning system, giving the customer and the staff the best of both worlds - a comfortable temperature combined with clean air circulation.

The fact that products like this are relatively inexpensive to buy, install and maintain, really does put the onus on the leisure industry to take the initiative and look at their premises from the point of view of the total environment and not just from the standpoint of whether or not their customers are comfortable.

Air cleaning units do not replace oxygen used by the room's occupants, so, despite filtering out unwanted elements, the air passing through such units is simply fed back into the environment.

For successful air management, all venues need some form of air intake. The use of a fan to bring oxygen into the atmosphere and to create 'over pressure', is an effective method. In other words, a situation where the pressure in the room is higher than outside, so air tends to push outwards through cracks in the floor, around windows and doors.

Compare this with another common system - the extract fan. This will certainly drag tobacco smoke away but, at the same time, will remove air which, in winter, has been



Woods of Colchester has provided several Renault car factories with ventilation equipment. Woods claims that its fans mimic real life wind conditions and atmospheric pressures. Enquiry No 208

expensively heated, and will create a situation of 'under pressure'. This means the heated air that has been taken out is replaced by cold air draughts from outside - causing customer discomfort.

Air pressure has to equalise itself, in the same manner that water finds its own level. A 12in. extract fan will take out around 1,200m³ an hour, which is a lot of air to replace - and don't forget the dust and dirt inevitably drawn in with the cold air.

A true air management system in terms of customer comfort, has to be a combined operation of air cleaning, fresh air intake and temperature control.

We use the word 'true' rather than perfect, simply because such set-ups which provide, clean and temperature controlled air, can still receive criticism. A common complaint is that bars and clubrooms remain smoky, despite the fact that fresh air is being circulated and dirty air efficiently treated and returned.

Unfortunately, here we unveil a second area of misunderstanding. So long as the people are still smoking in a room, it is extremely difficult for the air in that room to be 100% cleaned.

Similarly, the air in a bar will remain smoky for some time, even after the last smoking customer has left. Consequently, air cleaning units need to continue working even though no new pollutants are being added

or grease from food preparation.

Savings like this can more than pay for the running costs of an air management system.

Having the right equipment is one thing, ensuring its effectiveness is another. To some extent this can be eased by designating Non-smoking areas, then ensuring the air cleaning system is concentrated in those areas where smoking is allowed. By doing this, smoke is not dragged unnecessarily into non-smoking areas, although the system as a whole will be working to benefit the atmosphere in the whole area.

Inevitably, the question of litigation raises its ugly head. In the US, where litigation has reached heights as yet undreamed of in the UK (Not in the building industry - See 'Soapbox' page 12, Ed), the tobacco industry is under siege - and deservedly so. Individuals, and whole groups of people, are



Air cleaners should be left constantly running as part of any long-term air hygiene strategy - the energy penalty is about the same as that of a domestic fridge

to the atmosphere. The perceived costs of leaving such units running also sits uncomfortably with some venue owners.

In fact, energy costs with air cleaning units can be very low. At lower speed ranges, the some units use less than 100W an hour - about the same as a domestic refrigerator - which is why the units should be left constantly running.

By leaving the air cleaning system active, it will remove any gaseous material left over and will also collect much of the particulate matter that would otherwise settle on paintwork, furniture and curtains.

Keeping dust and dirt off furniture and furnishing fabrics, reduces cleaning and replacement costs; redecoration cycles can be extended as well, simply because ceilings and walls are not being stained by tobacco tar

lodging claims against employers who they feel allowed them to be unnecessarily exposed to the effects of passive smoking. And claims are already being settled in the plaintiffs' favour; US flight attendants, for example, settled their claims in a high profile case recently.

In this country we tend to be less confrontational, but that is changing rapidly. Already the opinion is being expressed that, with the knowledge now available of the dangers that exist from passive smoking, the likelihood is that successful litigation is not far off here.

One year ago, the Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers launched its Atmosphere Improves Results (AIR) campaign to demonstrate that the licensed trade can regulate itself rather, than having legislation imposed upon it. In contrast to the figures produced

from research based on San Francisco, restaurants in New York where anti-smoking measures have been enforced, claim to have lost as much as 15% of their trade.

Where self-regulation has been taken up in this country, 75 % of pubs with non-smoking areas claim their food sales have improved, whilst 64% claimed they had increased overall turnover. With food becoming increasingly important to pubs (and, according to recent reports, the quality of many is fast approaching that of good class restaurants) it is also bringing more children into restaurant areas, and they, as is now accepted, are very susceptible to the dangers posed by passive smoking. Hence, a smoking policy that benefits them is also going to bias parents in favour of premises that have a properly formulated smoking policy.

A smoking policy, even when it is extended to certain bar areas doesn't have a detrimental effect on custom. In fact, by offering the best of both worlds, many are attracting new customers and again, boosting turnover.

Whatever policy is instituted, the law can still intervene, and ASH commissioned an opinion from John Melville Williams QC which was published late last year. In it he states what has been known for some time, that, "Knowledge, as a condition of liability or responsibility, is critical in many areas of law where people



Trilon has installed an electrostatic air cleaner in Trader Vic's restaurant at the London Hilton Hotel. The unit cleans the air extracted from the restaurant and has helped improve the efficiency of the Hotel's maintenance operation, the company says. Enquiry No 210

are, or may be, exposed to harmful substances."

He cites cases going back as far as the early 1980s where judgements maintained that, where there is developing knowledge, (the defendant) must keep reasonably abreast of it and not be too slow to apply it.

His opinion also deals with new knowledge, including that relating to passive smoking, the role of the Health & Safety Executive, and an employer's responsibility to individual workers. In conclusion, Mr Melville Williams states:

"Looking at the situation generally it seems to me the prime obligation rests on employers and the Health &

Safety Executive to take action, first by the employers preparing a COSHH assessment pursuant to regulation 6 of the 1988 regulations and then by acting on it and putting into effect protective measure. The HSE should also insist that all employers whose employees may work in a smoke polluted atmosphere have prepared and, if necessary, acted on such an assessment.

"Apart from that it appears to me that insurance companies have a role to play in promoting safety, including protection from atmospheric pollution, by their premium or claims policy. It has recently been announced that companies which do not ensure their computer systems

are year 2000 compliant, will not be covered for consequential loss. In the same way, insurance companies could put pressure on employers to ensure they put in place proper policies to protect non-smokers from Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS), otherwise it could result in the insurers being liable in damages."

The body of evidence that is building up only goes to lend support for air management policies to become an integral part of the building plans and employment conditions of the leisure industry. Whether self-regulation will stave off legislation will only be resolved in the long term, but, whatever happens, it would be a denial of human rights for smokers to be denied access to the facilities that would exist for non-smokers. Taking this argument to the next stage could give rise to a ban on drinking - and the results of this type of legislation were evident in America during the 1930's.

The facts are that we are going to have to live with smoking for the foreseeable future - in which case putting in place the means of dealing with its effects is the only sensible approach.

Ignore it at your peril - it is not going to go away.

● Bud Marconi is managing director of Aircare Europe.

Enquiry No 211

Planned management of smoking in public places

The air filtration industry has a prominent role to play in promoting active, informed, smoking management policies that have air filtration as their key feature.

One significant factor in achieving consensus in the 'great smoking debate' is the professionalism of the air filtration industry.

"We have the technology, we have the carbon-based products, and most importantly we have the know-how to ensure that air filtration plays a key part in helping to successfully resolve disagreement about smoking in public places," says Norman White, marketing manager of Interfilta.

"If nothing is done, then we are being cavalier with the nation's health, but experience has proved in Canada and elsewhere that seeking to criminalise and drive smoking tobacco underground does not stop people smoking."

"All that happens is that they will find unsuitable places in which to smoke which causes further problems and risks because these are difficult to monitor."

The best way forward, in his opinion, is the introduction of prudent measures to manage smoking in public. This will include the concept of defined smoking and no smoking areas.

"The fact is that we have got to continue to raise the profile

of the air filtration industry and combat the view taken by some businesses of air filters as a distress purchase. The fact is that businesses reliant on contact with the public have a commercial imperative to enhance their air filtration techniques. Good air quality is important to both non-smokers and smokers," says Mr White.

"We have also got to widen the circle of management involved in managing air filtration issues within each company and encourage them to take a holistic approach. At present we are, too often, seeing areas of responsibilities divided.

"This might lead to a personnel manager promoting smoking restrictions, but failing to liaise with the facilities manager who may only have unventilated rooms available for use as smoking areas."

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