MEDICAL GAS CONTROL

22 Hamilton Way
Oakham Business Park
Mansfield, Nottinghamshire
NG18 5BU
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)1623 628 281
Fax:+44 (0)1623 628 289

www.bprmedical.com

Media release

21 May 2018

US Veterans Health Administration decision to mandate oxygen firebreaks 'a victory for patient safety'

BPR Medical has welcomed the United States Veterans Health Administration (VA) decision to mandate the use of thermal fuses – also known as firebreaks - in all its home oxygen patient installations.

The VA published a Patient Safety Alert on May 8, requiring thermal fuses, which can prevent patient deaths and limit injuries in the event of an oxygen fire - to be installed on every stationary and portable oxygen system used by its 85,000 home oxygen patients. The change is being phased in over the next six months, with home oxygen installers' contracts being amended to reflect the new requirement.

As a result of the VA's Patient Safety Alert, all the 21 regional Veterans Integrated Service Network organisations (VISNs), which oversee healthcare for veterans, will also be required to formally report fires involving home oxygen.

There are no accurate figures for the number of fires involving home oxygen in the United States, however a report in 2017 by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recorded a likely annual death rate of 70 people (based on figures between 2011 and 2015), equivalent to one in 20 home fire deaths. The NFPA also states that there is an average of 1,190 burns each year due to home oxygen fires, although it describes these statistics as 'likely underestimates'.*

Richard Radford, Managing Director, BPR Medical, said, "Fires caused by patients smoking or being exposed to other dangers such as birthday candles, gas ovens and electrical devices while using home oxygen are an almost daily event. These fires don't just result in injuries or death for the patient but can also pose a serious risk to family and neighbours in the event of a whole house fire.

MEDICAL GAS CONTROL

22 Hamilton Way
Oakham Business Park
Mansfield, Nottinghamshire
NG18 5BU
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)1623 628 281
Fax:+44 (0)1623 628 289

www.bprmedical.com

"The decision by the VA to mandate thermal fuses in all its patients' oxygen installations is a victory for patient safety and a major step forward in ensuring that every home oxygen patient – no matter where they are in the world – benefits from the same level of protection."

BPR Medical developed its Firesafe™ cannula valve in 2004 as a means of arresting the spread of fire in home oxygen systems. It is an inexpensive device which is placed in the oxygen tubing or cannula and lasts for up to four years. A built-in thermal valve stops the flow of oxygen spreading down the oxygen tubing in the event of fire.

The VA's Patient Safety Alert can be found here:
https://www.patientsafety.va.gov/docs/alerts/INTERNET_AL18-01.pdf

For more information on firebreaks visit www.firebreaks.info

-ends-

For media enquiries, contact:
Colin Hallmark
07745 914170
bpr@3nine.co.uk

Notes to editors:

Oxygen fire statistics

- It is estimated that between 14% and 51% of home oxygen users continue to smoke, putting themselves, their families, neighbours, as well as their property at risk.

Source: Cooper, B. (2015). "Home Oxygen and Domestic Fires". Breathe, 11(1), pp.5-12.

- Up to 70 people are thought to be killed and over 1,000 injured in home oxygen fires in the US alone every year (3% of all home fire deaths). However, the real figure may be much higher.*

Source: Ahrens, Marty (September 2017). "Home Structure Fires". National Fire Protection Association.

*BPR Medical's own research is pointing to a figure of in excess of 100 deaths each year.

- One in four oxygen fires spread causing damage to entire properties.

MEDICAL GAS CONTROL

22 Hamilton Way
Oakham Business Park
Mansfield, Nottinghamshire
NG18 5BU
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)1623 628 281
Fax:+44 (0)1623 628 289

www.bprmedical.com

Source: Wolff, B. K.; et al. (July 11, 2016). "Flash Burns While on Home Oxygen Therapy: Tracking Trends and Identifying Areas for Improvement". American Journal of Medical Quality. doi:10.1177/1062860616658343.

About Firesafe™ Cannula Valve

An increased risk of fire is an unfortunate and all too common problem associated with oxygen therapy. Firesafe™ devices help reduce this risk by isolating the oxygen flow and extinguishing a fire tracking back along the oxygen delivery tubing.

Firesafe™ devices can be installed directly in the oxygen delivery circuit and at the interface with the oxygen supply equipment, providing the following benefits:

- Reducing the rate at which the fire spreads and the potential impact on other residents, patients or healthcare workers
- Preventing fire reaching the supply source
- Minimising the size of the fire and the cost of restoration
- Buying valuable time to evacuate people from the scene

Firebreaks and the law

Firebreaks are mandatory in the European Union and are a standard requirement on certain devices elsewhere in the world. The new European Medical Device Regulations, enacted on 26th May 2017, clarified that a firebreak device is required on all oxygen modalities, including oxygen concentrators, gaseous cylinders, and liquid oxygen Dewars and devices. Despite this, provision of firebreaks in Europe remains inconsistent.

About BPR Medical

Since 1990, BPR Medical has been an international leader in the design and manufacture of medical gas therapy solutions. The company has a reputation for innovation, quality, integrity and value is built on successfully providing market-leading products to the NHS and other healthcare providers in the UK and abroad.

In 2012, BPR Medical was honoured with the Queen's Award for Innovation for its Firesafe™ product range.

www.bprmedical.com