

UK Businesses Urged to Prioritise Water and Hygiene Amid Worsening Drought Crisis

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As record-breaking summer heatwaves, wildfires, and mounting drought restrictions place unprecedented strain on national infrastructure, UK businesses are being warned to rethink their water consumption strategies.

According to Jamie Woodhall, UK Technical & Innovations Manager at [Initial Washroom Hygiene](#), recent disruptions, including water shortages impacting washroom facilities at Gatwick Airport and burst mains affecting thousands in east London, signal a critical turning point for the country. With nearly three-quarters of England now under drought conditions, organisations must learn to navigate water scarcity without compromising public health.

“This summer’s record-breaking heatwave and series of wildfires are a brutal reminder of how quickly critical services can be affected when water availability comes under pressure,” Woodhall said.

“Organisations are being forced to find ways to reduce their water consumption and eliminate unnecessary waste.”

Protecting Hygiene Standards

While water companies rightly prioritise essential environments like hospitals, schools, and care settings, commercial organisations face tough choices. Woodhall stresses that businesses must carefully distinguish between critical and non-critical water usage, warning that well-intentioned conservation efforts can sometimes backfire.

A primary concern is hand hygiene. Relying on hand sanitiser alone instead of traditional handwashing, for instance, is not an adequate replacement and risks the spread of common illnesses like Norovirus.

“Providing clean water for handwashing is not only a legal requirement, but it also significantly contributes to keeping staff happy and healthy in the workplace, reduces absenteeism, and breaks the chain of infection,” Woodhall noted.

Tackling Hidden Waste

To bridge the gap between sustainability and hygiene, businesses must target major sources of internal waste. Washrooms represent a significant opportunity for improvement. For example, a standard urinal flushing four times an hour can waste more than 250,000 litres of water annually. Implementing smart PIR sensor-based flushing systems or properly managed waterless alternatives can drastically cut consumption.

Even minor daily routines matter. Research from the consumer water advisory group CCW highlights that repeatedly filling washing-up bowls to clean office mugs throughout the day consumes far more water than running a single, efficient dishwasher cycle on ‘eco’ mode at the end of the day.

The New Reality

Looking ahead, Woodhall urges businesses to treat drought conditions not as a temporary inconvenience, but as a permanent shift in the operating landscape. Facilities management plans must integrate long-term water resilience, smarter consumption monitoring, and upgraded technology.

“Sensible water conservation isn’t about a wholesale reduction of water use; it’s about prioritising where available water should be used, and where it shouldn’t on an organisational and individual level,” Woodhall concluded. “The summer of 2026 is telling us we must act now and view water use through a more critical lens.”