



Notes for editors

Established in 1982 by Gary Nicholls and his business partner Paul Argles, the Swiftclean Group's core business covers all aspects of building services hygiene. This includes specialist services such as legionella prevention and control, kitchen extract cleaning, general ventilation system hygiene and other niche areas of hygiene such as pigeon infestation hygiene cleaning and fire damage decontamination.

The company has expanded steadily and has established an enviable reputation for the delivery of an exceptionally high quality service.

Swiftclean began in the Nicholls family garage in Rayleigh, Essex providing a boiler tube cleaning service and its first job was at Finchley Fire Station. Diversification into ductwork hygiene came three years later when it secured the ventilation cleaning contract for the British Airways cabin crew canteen at Heathrow.

The infamous Staffordshire Legionnaires' Disease outbreak of 1988 was a crucial milestone for Swiftclean, which then diversified into cleaning and refurbishing water storage tanks.

Three years later the company reached its first major crossroads:

In 1991 with a turnover of around £400,000, Paul and Gary secured a £1.8m contract from Bovis to clean up the mess created by the Minster Court fire in London. Many small companies have over-stretched themselves in similar situations and gone under, but Gary and Paul used it as a springboard.

However, having just successfully completed the Minster Court cleanup work and with the company poised for the next stage of its growth, tragedy struck when Paul was killed in a motorcycle accident aged just 29.

He left behind two young children and wife Julia, who decided to continue the business with Gary taking up her late husband's 50% share. Today she is still

running the contracts side of Swiftclean and one of her sons has also worked for the company.

The Minster Court project had allowed the company to buy a half-acre site close to Southend Airport and build its current headquarters.

Present day activity

Swiftclean passed the £4m turnover mark in 2008 and current directly employed staff levels are in the region of 73 people, including 34 carrying out on site remedial cleaning work and nine surveyors doing the initial inspections and risk assessments for both ductwork cleanliness and legionella risk in water systems.

The company received its Investors in People recognition from the Essex Training and Enterprise Council in 1997 and opened a Midlands operation in 2002.

Gary has played a key role in helping BSRIA, the HVCA and CIBSE develop three separate ventilation hygiene guidance documents: BSRIA's standard specification for Ventilation Hygiene (FMS 1); the HVCA's Guide to Good Practice 'Cleanliness of Ventilation Systems' (TR/17 First + Second editions and TR/19 2005) and CIBSE's Hygienic Maintenance of Office Ventilation Ductwork (TM26:2000).

These have been adopted throughout the industry as the definitive guides to ventilation hygiene and are endorsed and distributed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Gary is the chairman of the HVCA's Ventilation Hygiene Group Branch for 2009, having also held the role in 2003 and 2004. During his membership (and indeed, Chairmanship), Gary has played an active part in the development and revision of the association's specifications and guides to good practice, taking a particular interest, currently, in matters related to fire prevention and risk assessment. He is also a regular contributor to industry seminars and debates.

He has recently been involved in helping the HVCA to comment on a Draft European Standard (EN 15780) regarding cleanliness of ventilation. His knowledge on kitchen grease extract cleanliness has been called upon by legal teams on a number of cases where he has acted as an expert witness during claims disputes over insurance condition/warranty compliance between insurers and their insured clients following devastating kitchen extract fires.

The Swiftclean Group's stated objectives are to create superior conditions within air and water systems and to achieve this the company continually invests in research and development of services and products. It launched 'Permasolvent' in 1997 to help address the 'scale' problem that was costing UK building owners around £1bn a year. This was followed by the 1998 launch of the Ventilation Hygiene Monitoring Service to achieve cost-effective compliance with mandatory regulations, and the 2000 launch of ventilation hygiene risk assessment procedures.

In 2003, Swiftclean introduced a 'complete satisfaction or your money back' guarantee as a further example of its innovative approach.

As one of the largest independent companies operating in the building hygiene sector, Swiftclean offers the security of a company that has been established for over a quarter of a century and has a solid technical background.

Financially secure, the company employs and trains its own direct work force to carry out contracted work from strategically placed locations throughout the country. A new position of Training and Quality Manager was created in March 2008 to support the business commitment to training and in line with its IIP recognition. The Swiftclean Training manager delivers in house training in the specialist area of ventilation system cleaning, in line with the recently launched (June 2008) HVCA green book ventilation hygiene training scheme and this service is also offered externally from two training centres (Southend-On-Sea and Leicester).

An in-depth knowledge of current regulations, guidelines and best practice, together with a watching brief on impending changes and new legislation ensure that Swiftclean's clients have the opportunity to enter into a "technical partnership" and to make use of the company's expertise as an extension of their own building services departments.

It has never been more important to comply with relevant Health & Safety legislation and Codes of Practice. Swiftclean can advise on all matters of building services, health, safety and hygiene within the workplace, ensuring that clients' premises are safe, healthy and legal.

For further information, visit www.swiftclean.co.uk

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