



@PHCPro

April 2020 Vol 20 | No 4

HYDRONICS

Hot Rod Rohr Earns
Carlson-Holohan Award

p 22

PLUMBING

Choosing the Right Leak
Detection Solution

p 36

MECHANICAL

AHR EXPO 2020 Recap

p 62

phc **PHCP PROS** plumbing + hydronic contractor news **20** YEARS

PHC News and the following sponsors hope to inspire you by providing you with this free copy!



www.ez-flo.net
800-486-5256



See the ad on page 55.
www.bradfordwhite.com
800-523-2931



See the ad on page 39.
www.eemax.com
800-543-6163



See the ad on page 37.
www.watts.com
978-689-6066



See the ad on page 23.
www.hotwater.com



champion-arrowhead.com
800-332-4267



INSIDE THIS ISSUE America's Oldest Family Owned PHCPro

Welcome to our first in a series of the 10 oldest PHCP companies still in family hands. Pg 30.

PLUMBING

Choosing the Right Leak Detection Solution — and Selling Your Clients on its Benefits

Proper choice provides a unique opportunity to build trust and cement long-term relationships with your clients.

BY KATHLEEN ANTHONY AND JANICE DESPOTAKIS

A few years ago, indoor plumbing leak detection was a niche product offering with limited options at your local supply shop. Today, it's gone mainstream — ads are all over your trade magazines and promos arrive with coupon collections in homeowners' mailboxes.

Leak detection even made a recent appearance on "The Tonight Show," with the team from "Ask This Old House" showing Jimmy Fallon how easy it is to protect yourself against leaks when you install a smart automatic shut-off system.

It's impossible to deny the benefits of leak detection, so why is it so hard to convince your clients that it's in their best interests?

With so many options available in the marketplace, how do you cut through the clutter and choose the best solution for the job?

The last thing you need is a headache during installation, a system that is frustrating for the client to deal with, or a water sensor or shut-off valve not delivering on its promises when needed most.

Excuses, excuses

Plumbing leaks can quickly cause thousands of dollars in water damage requiring substantial clean-up and repair, waste hundreds of gallons of water, aggravate tenants, and lead to increased insurance premiums. Water damage is the No. 1 source of property losses for owners of offices, apartments and other real estate facilities, notes Zurich American Insurance Co. (<https://bit.ly/2W9akKD>).

Chances are your big commercial clients are aware that there are solutions available to prevent these types of headaches. So why haven't more of them installed leak detection? You've probably heard reasons such as:

"My building/plumbing is new — leaks won't happen."

"If there is a leak, it will be easy to fix."

"It's not worth the expense."

"That's what insurance is for."



Despite increasing visibility in the marketplace, many property owners remain hesitant to invest in leak detection — until they experience firsthand all the inconvenience that accompanies a significant leak. Photo credit: iStock.com/SasinParaksa

The fact is, leaks are simply inevitable. They are not a reflection of system design, quality or workmanship. Plumbing fixtures, joints and water-fed appliances are simply prone to failure over time. Users inadvertently break things, block up the system or otherwise cause overflows.

And when minor leaks go undetected for hours, days or even weeks, the resulting property damage can turn catastrophic — especially in common-risk commercial, residential or office buildings.

Making the case for leak detection

Here's the thing — dealing with the leak itself is just the tip of the iceberg. It's the aftermath where things can get extremely uncomfortable for property owners.

For example, a boiler gasket fails and floods a building's upper-floor mechanical room, also affecting the units below. The plumbing contractor is notified, who replaces the gasket and removes the water. In the meantime, some tenants are displaced while repairs are made to their units. Others don't have heat or hot water while the boiler is being repaired. They start complaining on Facebook and Twitter.

A couple of months later, another

gasket fails and the room floods again. The insurance company increases rates and threatens to drop coverage altogether. And the property owner's focus shifts from routine building maintenance to constantly fixing tenant units.

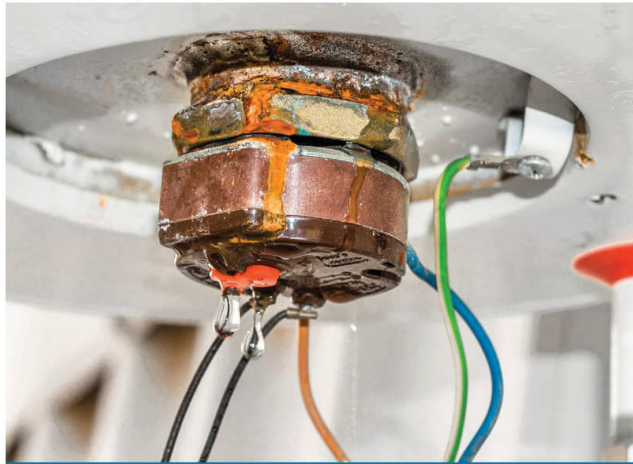
But you're not just protecting against sudden catastrophic events like this. A plenum water heater can leak for days, and no one will know until the ceiling collapses. Dishwasher and beverage dispenser supply leaks in breakrooms can go undetected for weeks, causing mold issues in addition to water damage. In a medical office building unattended over the weekend, a feed line failure can mean multiple units are shut down with soggy carpets and damaged equipment come Monday morning.

And undetected slow leaks can lead to skyrocketing utility bills. The list goes on and on.

And homeowners are not immune to damage from indoor plumbing leaks either:

- One in 50 homes files a property damage claim due to water damage or freezing each year, with an average claim of more than \$10,000, says the Insurance Information Institute (<https://bit.ly/3cSd8lt>).

- Water heater failures cost homeowners an average of more than \$4,000 per incident after the



Water heater failures are a common headache for homeowners and managers of apartment and condo buildings. Affordable, dependable leak detection solutions are available to shut off the water supply to the tank, keeping damage to a minimum. Photo credit: iStock.com/zms

deductible, according to a previous study by the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety.

- And a burst washing machine hose can release 650 gallons of water in a single hour. Imagine the damage that can do as the water spreads from an upper-floor laundry room.

There are effective leak detection options available to fit all spaces and budgets, and these systems should be looked at as an investment in damage mitigation and not a sunk expense.



As water damage has emerged as a leading source of claims, and insurance companies are increasingly offering discounts for properties employing plumbing leak detection. Some even mandate system installation if a claim was paid out in the past or a property uses high-end finishes. Most leak detection systems pay for themselves the first time they're called into action. If that

isn't enough of an incentive to recommend leak detection, consider this: according to a 2013 EPA update (GAO-14-430), 40 of 50 state water managers expected water shortages in some portion of their states under average conditions in the next decade. Population and economic growth, coupled with climate change, are expected to complicate the situation further.

Why does this matter? Because a 1/8-inch pipe crack can leak 250 gallons of water in one day. A faucet leaking at the rate of one drip per second can result in 7 gallons per day of wasted water. Although the EPA encourages daily water conservation measures, it does not thoroughly address how to prevent catastrophic water loss — where a single leak can quickly undermine any water conservation efforts.

These are real challenges your clients face every day, and you are in a unique position to recommend affordable, proactive measures that can protect them.

Choose a dependable solution

You'll find some manufacturers specialize in leak detection and offer a wide variety of accessories to customize solutions for specific applications and code concerns. For others, leak detection is more a "me-too" product line extension with limited options and flexibility.

To monitor for leaks in commercial facilities and mechanical rooms, you may need to search out a solution with oversized shut-off valve options, such as the FloodMaster RS-080 from Reliance Detection Technologies. Photo credit: Reliance Detection Technologies

A solution that delivers on its promises over time will be built on reliable, commercial-grade components. Failure of the actuator to close the water supply valve or downtime due to a "stuck valve" that can't be reset can turn a minor leak into a major disaster — and get you into hot water with your client.

Most systems are now built from corrosion- and lead-free materials meeting U.S. EPA Safe Drinking Water Standards. But here's an example of something to look for: a gear-driven shut-off valve actuator may prove to be more reliable than a spring-driven actuator, which is susceptible to failure from mineral buildup over time.

You also may want to look out for water sensors sitting directly on the floor and may be more susceptible to false alarms due to humidity. Sensors raised just 1/16 inch allow for air circulation to help alleviate that issue while promptly detecting accumulating water.

If you work with commercial clients, seek out manufacturers who can support the unique requirements of their buildings, including:

- Oversized shut-off valves to support the supply pipe up to 2 inches in diameter.
- Kits with plenum-rated components that make it easier for you to work within those challenging hidden spaces.
- Dry contacts to tie into building security and automation systems.

There's a reason leak detection is growing in popularity with top contractors. It provides a nice additional revenue stream for equipment installation. And when the system detects a leak? You'll be the client's first call for necessary repairs. It provides a unique opportunity to build trust and cement long-term relationships with your clients by establishing that you're advocating for their best interests and helping them look out for their bottom line. ●

Kathleen Anthony is the product manager for Reliance Detection Technologies, a provider of indoor commercial and residential plumbing leak detection and automatic water shut-off solutions, including the American-made FloodMaster line. Janice Despotakis is the marketing manager for Madison Co., RDT's parent company. For more information or assistance with your next project, visit www.reliancedetection.com.

“My building is new...

LEAKS WON'T HAPPEN.”

“That's what insurance is for.”

“If there's a leak, it'll be easy to fix.”

“Leak detection isn't worth the expense.”

EXCUSES, EXCUSES.

Your clients may not realize it, but water damage is the No. 1 source of property losses for owners of offices, apartments, and other real estate facilities. And 1 in 50 homes files a property damage claim due to water damage or freezing each year.

RDT can help with comprehensive, commercial-grade solutions for indoor plumbing leak detection and water damage mitigation. Contact us to see how easy it can be to protect your clients, build trust and improve your bottom line!



BREAK THROUGH THE EXCUSES.

Give your clients affordable leak detection they can trust.

www.RelianceDetection.com/noexcuses

888-771-4929