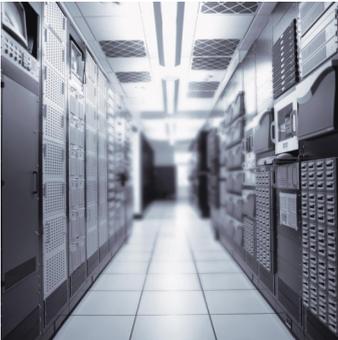




## Data Centres are ‘too cold!’

Jennifer McColl  
Marketing  
ebm-papst UK Ltd  
Phone: +44 (0)1245 468555  
Fax: +44 (0)1245 466336  
Jennifer.McColl@uk.ebmpapst.com

Twitter.com/ebmpapstuk  
Facebook.com/ebmpapstuk  
Youtube.com/ebmpapstuk  
www.ebmpapst.co.uk



The UK is currently over-cooling its data centres, according to a leading industry expert.

Speaking at a seminar focused on energy use in data centres, Dr Ian Bitterlin of Ark Continuity Ltd, explained that many of the current guidelines on temperature and humidity are outdated, as they reflect the past use of punch cards and other early computer technology.

Hosted by ebm-papst UK – Europe’s leading manufacturer of high efficiency fans and motors – the seminar examined how new technologies, such as EC fans, can drive down the use of energy in areas where temperature control is key. Against this backdrop, Dr Bitterlin raised the issue that as modern servers have a greater resistance to heat and humidity there is an opportunity to raise the acceptable limits.

Part of the industry’s reluctance to accept higher air temperatures in data centres is a result of the existence of business-critical Service Level Agreements (SLAs), which govern the relationships between data centre providers and their clients. The effective control of temperature is a key component of these agreements and yet, if clients were encouraged to better understand the relationship between modern technology and cooling, then the levels set out in these documents could be raised.

This is crucial when you consider that every 1°C increase in temperature equates to a 5% saving in energy spend.

Dr Bitterlin comments: “In the UK any consideration of the cost of IT used to be focused on the physical building. This is changing, as high energy costs and government schemes such as the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) focus corporate minds on energy consumption.

“If we are to make effective improvements in levels of consumption, particularly in the data centre sector, then we need to get smarter about our cooling and air management strategies. I suggest that a safe increase in acceptable temperature levels over

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the next five years would have no impact on the performance of data centres, and yet could deliver significant savings in energy consumption and reduce carbon emissions.”

Commenting, Helen McHugh, head of sustainability at ebm-papst, says: “We were inspired by Dr Bitterlin’s analogy that cold air should be treated as if it was vodka – and that companies should avoid wasting a single drop!

“In addition to accepting higher limits for temperature and humidity where the technology allows, we are actively supporting data centre providers in improving their air and temperature management.

“Often we find that cooling systems are run at a constant speed, designed for worst case – with no actual reflection of server demand. Data centres may also find that they are cooling the entire floor just to reduce the temperature in a crucial ‘hot spot’. This leads to over-cooling of the larger percentage of the site – wasting money and negatively impacting on the environment.

“EC technology, such as that championed by ebm-papst, enables data centre managers to be much smarter about the way in which they manage and target their air conditioning, and enables them to make significant savings to the running of these energy-heavy facilities.”

ebm-papst offers companies free site surveys in order to identify opportunities for energy saving, with many of their highly-energy efficient fan products able to deliver pay-back within 2 years.

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