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Important Information Regarding Coronavirus COVID-19 & The Use of Compressed Air

Currently there is information circulating claiming that compressed air is a potential source of Corona virus COVID-19, requiring the installation of sterile air filters (or more frequent filter sterilisations and element changes) to prevent the contamination of food, beverage or pharmaceutical products.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has been very clear that Coronavirus COVID-19 is not an airborne virus.

Coronavirus COVID-19 is spread from human to human by droplet dispersion (from coughs and sneezes) and by contact between humans and surfaces contaminated with the droplets from coughs and sneezes.

Currently, WHO is investigating the rare possibility that when an aerosol-generating procedure, such as that carried out in a medical care facility is undertaken, particles can become aerosolised, meaning that they can remain airborne for a little bit longer. There is a recommendation that health-care workers take additional precautions when they are working on patients and carrying out these procedures.

Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, head of WHO's emerging diseases and zoonosis unit, told reporters during a virtual news conference on Monday. "In health-care facilities, we make sure health-care workers use standard droplet precautions with the exception ... that they're doing an aerosol-generating procedure, ... we are confident that the guidance that we have is appropriate," she added.

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It is important to understand that while airborne viruses do exist, and these viruses, if drawn into an air compressor intake, have the potential to multiply in warm, wet, under-treated compressed air, Coronavirus COVID-19 has not demonstrated these behaviours. In addition, the location of these aerosol-generating procedures is not located typically near a compressor intake.

There is no scientific evidence to support the claims that compressed air is another potential source of Coronavirus COVID-19 or that compressed air used in the manufacturing of food, beverage or pharmaceutical products can contaminate these products with the virus.

For further information speak to your BCAS member and if in any doubt refer to Food and Beverage Grade Compressed Air Best Practice Guideline 102 for compressed air specification that inhibits the growth of micro-organisms for direct contact applications

Vanda Jones
Executive Director