

**Synopsis** Contaminated Medical Gas Outlets Sicken Patients

**Severity** Life Safety

**Source** Not Disclosed

**Source Date** Wednesday, August 14, 2013

Existing medical air outlets were replaced on existing headwall units in a 24-room critical care wing. The new outlets were installed by the manufacturer's representative as a part of the sale, and were then connected to the existing drop lines by a certified medical gas installer.

Since the outlets were a direct replacement installed by the manufacturer, no independent verification was requested until a strong, obnoxious odor was detected. By that time, the outlets had already been placed into service.

Upon investigation, bulks of a black, grease-like substance was found inside the outlet mechanisms. Medical gas outlets are supposed to be clean. Typically, O-rings may contain minute quantities of a special lubricant, but not anything near the quantity of the substance found in the actual mechanisms.

The manufacturer immediately replaced the outlets and no further information was provided. Ventilator patients were immediately taken off-line and their conditions were guarded.

This incident is a strong reminder to never assume that new parts or equipment are safe to use without proper onsite testing and verification by a qualified individual. The risk is high, especially when parts are not inspected or tested before shipping.