

Tru-Test 2000 and 3000 indicator series – compulsory service

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

These FAQs are intended to provide you with additional information as well as assist you in handling any potentially difficult customer queries about the compulsory service.

About the issue

1. What is the scale of this problem?

The problem is restricted to older indicators manufactured before October 2008, which were likely purchased between 1998 and 2008. 11,494 3000 series indicators and approximately 10,000 2000 series indicators were sold in approximately 40 countries worldwide. We are aware of just seven incidents occurring since the first in 2002, which represents a 0.03% probability, or 1 in 3,333. However the safety of our customers is what's most important and that's why, as a precaution, we have decided to conduct a compulsory service to remedy the problem.

2. What's causing the problem – the battery or the indicator?

The root cause is the battery. Standard NiMH (nickel-metal hydride) batteries, such as the ones used in this particular batch of indicators, in certain circumstances can emit small amounts of hydrogen gas. Over time, it is possible for pressure to build up within the indicator and, through some form of external trigger (such as static electricity) this may result in the front panel of the indicator cracking with force.

It is important to note that our new product designs use different battery technologies and are not affected by this issue.

3. What are the 'certain circumstances' under which the battery emits hydrogen?

Small amounts of hydrogen can be emitted if one of the following occurs:

- battery internal chemistry failure
- charging control failure
- extreme temperatures

4. *So it sounds like the battery manufacturer is at fault. What action, if any, have you taken against them?*

In certain conditions NiMH batteries can emit small amounts of hydrogen gas over time, and that is what has happened in this case. Similar battery issues have occurred in several industries now (e.g. scuba diving equipment), especially during the period in question – the late 1990s and early 2000s. Technology has improved and much more is known now about how to design products with batteries now than it was at the time of this particular design. We changed our subsequent indicator designs and manufacturing methods to make the best use of the available technology, and will continue to do so.

It is important to note that our new product designs use different battery technologies and are not affected by this issue.

5. *My indicator is quite old – if there was a problem, wouldn't it have happened by now?*

While we are only aware of seven incidents occurring since 2002, there is no apparent pattern. The safety of our customers is our number one priority and that's why, as a precaution, we have now decided to conduct a compulsory service to remedy the problem.

End-customer safety / risk

6. *Why is my safety at risk – what could actually happen?*

It's really important to note that there is a very small risk of an incident occurring, however our customers' safety is our number one priority, which is why, as a precaution, we've decided to conduct this compulsory service to remedy the problem.

While serious injuries have not occurred in the seven known incidents to date, there is the potential for a loud 'bang' noise and the potential for plastic fragments to be propelled.

7. *Are you trying to play this down – we're talking about an explosion with the potential to cause injury, aren't we?*

Based on what we know about the seven incidents to date, the force of the cracking can vary. While serious injuries have not occurred, there is the potential for a loud 'bang' noise and the potential for plastic fragments to be propelled. We are not

taking any chances, which is why, as a precaution, we are now proceeding with a compulsory service to remedy the problem.

8. *I don't want to go near my indicator if it might explode – what can you do for me?*

Customer safety is our number one priority and we are confident that, if you follow the handling instructions we have provided, there is an extremely low risk of anything happening. We have had an independent test lab conduct tests which confirm that the safe handling instructions we have described will result in an extremely low risk of incident. However if you are uncomfortable doing this then we can arrange to send someone to you to do the compulsory service on site.

9. *What happens to those customers who you don't manage to contact about the compulsory service? They'll still be at risk, won't they?*

The risk is very low. While we're investing a significant amount of resource in an effort to contact as many affected customers as possible, we won't be able to reach absolutely everyone. In these cases, we know that products come in for servicing over time and this procedure will be performed in any affected indicators that are returned for any form of service.

About the compulsory service

10. *Exactly what will be done during this compulsory service?*

It is a quick and simple procedure. Service agents or other trained people will be opening the indicator and inserting some re-combiner beads in to it, which have been proven to absorb any hydrogen gas which may be emitted by the batteries. We have had an independent test lab conduct tests which confirm that the addition of the beads will resolve the issue.

11. *How long will it take?*

The compulsory service itself takes about 10 minutes. However, depending on how we get the indicator from you, it might take up to 4 weeks to return it. This depends on the best way of receiving and returning your unit and will be discussed with you when you make contact with our representative in your region.

12. After the compulsory service are you guaranteeing the performance of my indicator?

We are committed to ensuring that indicators will be returned to customers in the same working order as before, and any existing warranty will still apply. However if the indicator is not under warranty, no extended or extra warranty will be provided following the compulsory service.

Note that we have had an independent test lab conduct tests which confirm that the addition of the beads will resolve the battery issue. The compulsory service procedure will not have any other impact on the unit.

13. If the risk of a further incident is so low, why should I bother returning my indicator? I'm willing to take that chance.

Yes, the risk is very low however your safety is our number one priority, and that's why, as a precaution, we have decided to conduct a compulsory service to remedy the problem. We will take all necessary steps to ensure the compulsory service is conducted in a way that minimises any inconvenience to you. Ultimately it is your decision, however our strong recommendation is that you have your indicator serviced to ensure ongoing safety and product performance.

End-customer inconvenience

14. I don't want to get my indicator serviced – can you just provide me with a new one?

Unfortunately we are unable offer you a replacement indicator. The compulsory service is a simple and quick procedure. We will take all necessary steps to ensure the compulsory service is conducted in a way that minimises any inconvenience to you and have a number of options to help achieve this.

15. But I use my indicator all the time – this will seriously inconvenience me

We acknowledge that this may be an inconvenience to you. However, after serious consideration, we decided that it is in the best interests of our customers' safety to proceed with this compulsory service.

We will take all necessary steps to ensure the compulsory service is conducted in a way that minimises any inconvenience to you and takes place as quickly as possible.

16. *Are you offering me any incentive or compensation for doing without my indicator while it's out of action?*

Unfortunately we aren't in a position to compensate you. However I can assure you that we are taking all necessary steps to ensure the compulsory service is conducted in a way that minimises any inconvenience, and have a number of options to help achieve this. We are confident that you will be without your indicator for no longer than 4 weeks.

17. *4 weeks sounds like a very long time to me?*

In the vast majority of cases it will be much less than 4 weeks. Our representative will be able to give you an indication of the timeframe for you.

Tru-Test Group's response to the issue

18. *How long has Tru-Test Group known about this problem and why have you decided to act now?*

We have been carefully monitoring the situation since the first incident in 2002. However because there were so few incidents, and no obvious pattern, it was decided to continue monitoring. When the total number of incidences reached four we immediately changed our manufacturing process from October 2008, which resolved the issue.

We have announced a compulsory service now because, even though we know the risk of a further incident is very low, it will remove the uncertainty surrounding the issue. We want our customers to have a product they can rely on to safely do what it was intended to do.

19. *That seems like a very long time to act. Why didn't you issue a recall when you first became aware of the problem?*

We have been carefully monitoring the situation since the first incident in 2002. However because there were so few incidents, and no obvious pattern, it was decided to continue monitoring. When the total number of incidences reached four

we immediately changed our manufacturing process from October 2008, which resolved the issue.

20. Have you alerted the appropriate government authorities about this?

Yes, we are working with the authorities in our key markets of NZ, Australia, the UK and Europe and have also carefully considered consumer product laws in Brazil and the USA.

21. This must be costing Tru-Test Group a fortune – it seems like an over-reaction to a small problem?

We're investing a significant amount of resource in an effort to contact as many affected customers as possible. The safety of our customers is what's most important and that's why, as a precaution, we have decided to conduct a compulsory service to remedy the problem. We take the integrity of our product performance extremely seriously.

22. This seems like a pretty basic design fault – shouldn't you have known about the battery issue when these products were first designed?

Battery issues have occurred in several industries now, especially during the period in question – the late 1990s and early 2000s. Technology has improved and much more is known now about how to design products with batteries now than it was at the time of this particular design. We changed our subsequent indicator designs and manufacturing methods to make the best use of the available technology, and will continue to do so.

23. Do you have any other products which might be affected by the same / similar issue?

No. This is an issue restricted to two specific products only. We have since changed our design and manufacturing methods to take account of improving battery technology.

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