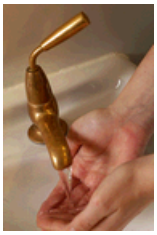
Copper Proven Effective Against New E. coli Strains



Brussels, 3rd June 2011: As the World Health Organization suggests the E. coli outbreak in Germany is a strain never before seen in an outbreak – O104:H4 – laboratory science conducted at the University of Southampton indicates a role for copper in preventing the spread of such infections.

Professor Bill Keevil, Head of the Microbiology Group and Director of the Environmental Healthcare Unit at the University of Southampton, explains: *"A study looking at copper's efficacy against new strains of E. coli has just been completed. Although it did not specifically look at O104, all the strains investigated have died rapidly on copper."*

On a dry copper surface, the science shows 10 million E. coli bacteria are eliminated within 10 minutes. On a wet copper surface, one could expect a total kill within around 45 minutes. This antimicrobial property is inherent to the metal, and shared with alloys such as brass and bronze.

In the wake of this outbreak, hand washing and careful food preparation have been highlighted as key concerns, as has cross-contamination. Any raw food placed on a work surface can contaminate other food, or have bacteria transferred onto it from previous items resting there. Deployed as a touch surface in food preparation areas, copper will continuously eliminate any pathogens that settle on it, reducing the risk of cross-contamination, and helping to prevent the spread of infection.

Editor's Note: Professor Keevil will be presenting his findings at the forthcoming WHO International Conference on Prevention and Infection Control in Geneva on June 30th.

About The European Copper Institute

The European Copper Institute (ECI) is a joint venture between the world's leading mining companies, custom smelters and semi-fabricators (represented by the International Copper Association, Ltd) and the European copper industry. Its mission is to promote copper's benefits to modern society across Europe through its headquarters in Brussels and its network of eleven national Copper Development Associations. www.eurocopper.org

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