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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Trade body calls for outright retail ban of Nitrous Oxide**

The trade body representing the UK's compressed gases industry is calling on the Government to tackle escalating misuse of Nitrous Oxide among young people.

The British Compressed Gases Association (BCGA) is calling for an outright ban on consumer sales of Nitrous Oxide - also known as 'laughing gas' - which is now the most commonly used substance among 16 to 24-year-olds after cannabis.

According to the BCGA, misuse of Nitrous Oxide can cause permanent damage in the central nervous system, leading to loss of peripheral feeling, motor control and even paralysis. It can also be fatal.

The BCGA represents more than 100 companies involved in the supply of industrial, medical, food and gases and related equipment, and its chief executive Ellen Daniels has written to the Home Secretary calling for the ban this week.

The issue was also debated in Parliament on Tuesday night with MPs calling for action to combat the problem.

Ms Daniels said: "Recreational inhalation abuse of Nitrous Oxide is prevalent in the UK. Used inappropriately it can cause serious damage to the health and livelihood of users and can prove fatal.

“Many public spaces are also becoming littered with the 8g steel mini canisters, which are now the prevalent mode of supply.

“The BCGA’s position is that the Government should implement a straightforward ban on consumer sales of Nitrous Oxide in order to curb this blight on our society.

“We call upon Government to use their Consumer Protection powers to outright ban all direct consumer sales of Nitrous Oxide gas.”

Supplying Nitrous Oxide for inhalation, without appropriate medical licence and qualified supervision, is an offence under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.

The BCGA was instrumental in working with government to include Nitrous Oxide in the Act, but fears the situation is escalating have prompted the call for an outright ban of sales direct to consumers.

Ms Daniels added: “The Psychoactive Substances Act outlawed the knowing or reckless supply of Nitrous Oxide for inhalation and has also had a good effect in curbing the N20 trade.

“However, there remains a huge and growing problem in the supply of 8g mini-canisters of the gas.

“There are legitimate and important uses of gas, which would not be affected by a ban on retail sales, such as medical gas in hospitals, clinics, dental practices and midwifery.

“Nitrous Oxide is also used by professional catering companies to froth and propel synthetic cream. Direct sales to professionals in the catering sector would also be unaffected.

“However, the use of Nitrous Oxide for whipping cream is how many of the 8g canisters are sold, for illegitimate use.

“This is very problematic and introducing the retail ban would be instrumental in addressing this.

“Domestic synthetic cream frothing and dispense systems are not particularly common in the UK, so a retail ban would affect few consumers and there are well-known alternatives of ready-mixed aerosol cream products widely available.”

**ENDS**

[www.bcgga.co.uk](http://www.bcgga.co.uk)

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### **Notes To Editors – About BCGA**

The ‘invisible industry’ underpinning a safe, successful and healthy nation - industrial and medical gases are essential to the existence and wellbeing of thousands of people in the UK every day.

Industrial gases perform a wide-ranging role, supporting the manufacture of information technology, as well as key UK industrial sectors including steelmaking, refining, welding, chemical processing and electronics. They also help keep homes warm, water clean and food nutritious, appealing and affordable - while medical gases play a critical role in applications including respiratory care, pain therapies and anaesthesia.

The British Compressed Gases Association (BCGA) is the UK membership body for this critical industry. With a commitment to stringent quality, safety and environmental measures, BCGA members employ 19,000 people directly and account for an annual turnover of £2.7 billion.

Members of BCGA operate in a highly regulated industry and work together on technical, safety, health and environmental issues to achieve high standards of integrity and environmental care, both within their own and customers’ working environments.

BCGA promotes safety practice through its publications and also participates in the preparation and revision of National, European and International Standards.

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