My office smells like rotten eggs...should I call Facilities Maintenance to fix the sewer or should I check my UPS batteries?
Last one to find the source is a rotten egg...

Scenario:
- Facilities Maintenance calls for assistance with locating source of sewer odor

Preliminary Information:
- Drain lines were “snaked” the evening before on the floor above
- No direct drain lines above or around impacted area
- Only one office space impacted
The Impacted Area

Observations:
• Strong “rotten egg” smell
• Olfactory fatigue noticed after a few minutes of being in the area
• Nothing wet
• No piping in the ceiling
• No symptoms noticed in employees in the area (e.g., headache, watery eyes, nausea, etc.)
• People watching as I began looking more and more confused
The Impacted Area

Best guesses:
• Low concentration of possible hydrogen sulfide from an unknown source
• The source has to be inside the impacted area
• A prank is being pulled on the ESH guy

Action taken:
• Corner to corner sweep of the office to “spot the not”
• Noticed a red light and faint beeping coming from the APC battery backup unit beneath the desk
The rotten egg

Hot exterior housing
Sometimes you just need to vent...
Preventative Plans

• Identify how many of these APC units are in use, and in storage, throughout the organization
• Determine actual need of existing units
• Assess the age and condition of existing units—replace/dispose of as appropriate
• Incorporate a replacement requirement for these units into the Safety Manual (e.g., 5 year replacement cycle)
Similar situation...

- Pacific Northwest National Laboratory...March 2015
- Uninterruptible power supply (UPS) backup batteries fail at Radiochemical Processing Laboratory.
- Odor from internet equipment room
- Two year old UPS “smart” batteries had failed
- Failure alarm had been beeping but not detected due to noise in the area and little need to enter the room
- Lessons Learned:
  - 1. Acquire American Power Conversion (APC) UPS systems equipped with sensors that warn when batteries are failing and current limiting charging systems that deactivate the charger when batter voltage is too high.
Questions/Comments

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