

Legionella

What is legionella?

Legionella is a Disease caused by legionella bacteria. Common in natural water sources e.g. rivers, lakes but usually in low numbers. It may also be found in purpose-built water systems. People contract Legionnaires' disease by inhaling small droplets of water (aerosols) suspended in the air that contain the bacteria

Certain conditions increase the risk from legionella, i.e. water temperature between 20-45°C, water stored and/or re-circulated, deposits present that can support bacterial growth e.g. rust, sludge, scale, etc.

Certain water systems pose a greater risk than others - ones with water storage, cooling towers, etc. are a greater risk than direct mains-fed water systems.

As a landlord / owner or operator, what must I do?

Identify, assess & manage sources of risk – Ensure a legionella risk assessment (LRA) is carried out by a competent person (if school is under SEMS this will be through Property Services). Appoint a competent person(s) to take responsibility for controlling any identified risk from exposure to legionella bacteria.

Keep Records – If you have five or more employees you must record any significant findings. Records should include details of:

- Who's responsible for the LRA and implementing the controls/management plan.
- Significant findings of the risk assessment and the control scheme and details of its implementation.
- Details of the state of operation of the system, i.e. in use/not in use
- Results of any monitoring inspection, test or check carried out, and the dates

Possible control measures identified within the Legionella Risk Assessment could be:

- water temperature checks
- flushing outlets to ensure water in the pipes feeding these outlets isn't left too long, or getting warm and increasing the risk of bacteria growth
- routine testing and sampling of water, cleaning and sterilising water outlets (shower heads).



It's also worth remembering that control measures may need to change throughout the year, for example over the 6 weeks holidays the water consumption will decrease dramatically leaving stagnant water, so it may be that the caretaker goes in once a week to flush the system and all the toilets for example.