

There is potential for multiple outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease following the COVID-19 outbreak if actions taken now are not carefully considered. The responsibility for legionella control lies with the Dutyholder, but TWC are here to help

If sites that you have responsibility for have been shut down during the COVID-19 outbreak then you need to consider your plan for re-opening them when restrictions are lifted.

Review your legionella risk assessment

If it has been decided that part or all of a property will be closed, or access to it restricted, even temporarily, the Legionella management plan should be reviewed. Legionella control may be more critical if your water system is to be used significantly less during the building's temporary restriction of access or closure, you may well need to step up your Legionella control regime rather than reduce it. Stagnant water provides the ideal conditions for many pathogenic bacteria such as Legionella. Therefore, if water is not moving regularly through normal usage, you will need to take measure to ensure that it does not stagnate.

Key requirements during low occupation include:

- Flush all unused outlets at least weekly – twice per week in Healthcare facilities – to keep water moving and prevent stagnation. Ensure that this is documented correctly
- Showerheads and hoses not being used should be removed, drained and disinfected.
 - o Shower outlets should be added to the flushing regime.
 - o Non-removable showerheads should be added to the flushing regime and cleaned regularly, minimising the risk of aerosol formation.
- Ensure water storage plant, such as cold-water storage tanks and calorifiers etc. are only storing sufficient water for a complete turnover within a 24-hour period.
- During all flushing procedures, it is essential to minimise the risk of aerosol formation. Legionella bacteria can be carried in tiny water particles and inhaled, so you must take measures to prevent this.

Recommissioning Water Systems

It is essential that when buildings reopen following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, that any water system is not simply put straight back into use. During the period of shutdown it would be sensible to formulate a recommissioning plan for each water system to allow safe start-up and assurance to users that it is safe. Dutyholders will need access to competent, practical and informative advice and assistance from service providers remotely during the period of restricted movement.

The minimum expectation for small, simple hot and cold water systems would be flushing through with fresh mains water. Larger buildings, those with tanks, showers, calorifiers and more complex pipework the expectation is likely to be for more extensive flushing followed by cleaning and disinfection.

Where buildings have been empty for some time and during warm weather, it is likely that some increase in bacteria levels and biofilm will occur. These water systems may require more than a simple disinfection to be successful. Be prepared for the need to repeat some disinfections to achieve success.

In all cases where systems are being recommissioned it is sensible to have evidence to prove/reassure that the recommissioning process has been effective. As per legislation, samples should be taken 2-7 days following recommissioning and not on the day of disinfection. Follow up samples may need to be considered as part of the recommissioning plan.

While each individual water system is likely to need individual consideration, it will be helpful to be aware of the bigger picture with regard to demand on services. There will be an increased demand for flushing and disinfection, sampling and other system recommissioning work.

Where TWC can help

It is essential for your business up and running as soon as possible and TWC can help you do this. Contact us if you require our services at info@twc-services.co.uk or check our website at www.twc-services.co.uk for the services that we offer

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