



Legionella: Flush it out so there's no doubt!



Advice for Businesses during & after lockdown

It is very important that while many businesses and offices are shut down due to the pandemic, water systems are still well maintained to prevent future health issues like Legionella outbreaks. In vacant or partially unused properties, water can stagnate within water systems. This can lead to Legionella bacteria growing to harmful levels that could lead to someone contracting Legionnaires' Disease when water systems are brought back into use.

Legionella bacteria is commonly found in water. The bacteria multiply where temperatures are between 20-45°C, nutrients are available, and water is left undisturbed. The bacteria can cause Legionnaires' disease which is a potentially fatal type of pneumonia, contracted by inhaling airborne water droplets containing the bacteria. Such droplets can be created, for example, by hot and cold-water outlets, wet air conditioning units, and whirlpool baths or hot tubs.

The following information will help you maintain your water systems during this pandemic and prior to re-opening.

You should ensure that:

- All taps in the building are flushed. Start by running slowly at first and then increase gradually to full bore. Run cold taps until the water runs as cold as possible and hot taps until they run as hot as possible (there is no time limit on this, it will vary in different parts of the building)
- All external taps to be flushed as above
- All toilets to be flushed, where possible with toilet seat down. If no toilet seat, then persons should leave room during and after flush. Repeat - two flushes for each toilet
- All showers. Same applies as with taps but keep the shower head as low to the tray/ ground as possible to minimise spray. Then clean and disinfect all shower heads (including back wash showers).
- Dish washers/glass washers/ washing machines to be put on a cycle but, for fire precautions, should not be left running in a vacant building. If necessary, set the machine on a rinse cycle, do the other flushing tasks in the building and return to check how long is left of the cycle. If the appliance can be set to drain/ spin, it will empty. The appliance does not need to go through a full cycle
- Do not turn off or isolate/ drain Zip boilers as this could create dead legs in the system. Run water through them until they run cold so that water in the reservoir in the machine has been turned over
- Ensure that cold water dispensers, drinks machines, vending machines, coffee machines, taps in boiler houses, old toilets and stores are all flushed
- On large sites where there are hot and cold storage tanks and/ or long lengths of pipework in the water distribution system the flushing should attempt to match the normal usage pattern within a building (i.e. you need to turn over as much of the tank water as possible and the larger hot water cylinders).
- Kitchen appliances that use water including steam ovens need to be run on a weekly basis
- Any garden hoses that are not in regular use need to be disconnected from the tap and flushing carried out from the tap itself.
- Do not worry about overdoing the flushing. The more water movement then the cleaner the system
- In systems that have not been flushed for a while you may need to consider disinfection – this will need expert advice
- If you have a complex system, such as a calorifier or spa pool, you are advised to seek expert advice from a water treatment company specialising in the control of Legionella growth.
- **YOU MUST** record your actions in order to be able to evidence compliance.

This list is not exhaustive and will need to be adapted to your own situation

For more information on legionella and your duty as an employer or landlord, visit:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/index.htm>

Your insurance company may also have advice or specific requirements for you to complete prior to reoccupation or opening.