

**UNDERSTANDING
LEGIONELLA MANAGEMENT:
WHAT ARE THE RIGHT
QUESTIONS TO ASK? –
TOTAL WATER SOLUTIONS**

UNDERSTANDING LEGIONELLA MANAGEMENT: WHAT ARE THE RIGHT QUESTIONS TO ASK?

Responsibility falls on building owners, employers, facilities managers and landlords to ensure that the risk of legionella growth is minimised, that regular risk assessments take place, and that the wellbeing of building users is protected.

Failure to comply could result in prosecution under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) or the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulation (1994). It's therefore important that your business is fully protected, and that every possible risk of legionella growth has been identified and minimised. Here are the questions you should be asking to ensure your business remains compliant and your staff and building users are safe from legionella-related illnesses.



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WHAT IS LEGIONELLA?

Legionella is a bacterium which thrives in water, particularly standing water that is between 20 and 45°C and where there's a source of nutrients, such as a build-up of limescale, rust, sludge or biofilm.

If Legionella bacteria make their way into an "aerosol" form, where tiny droplets of bacteria-laden water float in the air, they can be inhaled, causing a serious lung infection called Legionnaire's Disease. Legionnaire's Disease can be life-threatening, particularly to more vulnerable individuals, causing symptoms ranging from respiratory problems through to kidney failure, sepsis or even loss of limbs.

WHAT ARE HIGH-RISK CONDITIONS?

In commercial properties, the conditions that are attractive to legionella include:

- A poorly maintained water infrastructure with dead legs and unnecessarily long pipes, where water can stand and stagnate;
- Dirty or rusty pipes and water tanks, where matter that could sustain bacteria is present;
- Water systems where water is recycled and exists in droplet form, which is easily inhaled;
- Water outlets that are not used regularly such as taps and showers in empty or quiet buildings;
- Hot tubs and spa pools, where water temperatures are maintained between 20 and 45°C, and multiple bathers use the same water between cleaning, meaning organic matter can accumulate.

The biggest risk however is poor management, lack of training and record keeping.

WHAT PREVENTATIVE MEASURES SHOULD BE TAKEN?

By law, every commercial and landlord's property must have a legionella risk assessment in place to identify the risk and advise what remedial measures and management processes need to take place. Measures such as rationalising the water infrastructure to remove dead legs and unnecessary lengths of pipe, professional cleaning and descaling of pipes and water tanks, and regular (at least weekly) running of showers and little-used outlets and increasing stored hot water temperatures are often recommended to ensure your business maintains compliance.

WHO SHOULD CONDUCT THE LEGIONELLA RISK ASSESSMENT?

HSE stipulates that the person to conduct your legionella risk assessment should be competent i.e. has the correct knowledge, training and adequate experience, including expertise on where legionella is likely to grow, what measures should be taken to reduce the risk of legionella and what ongoing control measures and management procedures are necessary. In order to meet these legal obligations, it's advisable to appoint an industry expert to carry out the risk assessment who is a member of the Legionella Control Association (LCA).





HOW CAN I ENSURE I MAINTAIN COMPLIANCE?

Your legionella risk assessment may identify areas where remedial work needs to be carried out in order to reduce the risk of legionella proliferation, as well as ongoing control measures to ensure your water system remains low-risk.

By ensuring the advised remedial works are carried out in a timely fashion, you are remaining compliant and protecting the wellbeing of your staff, visitors and other building users. Make sure a record is kept of any work that has been done in order to maintain your building's health and safety files.

Ensuring all staff are fully aware of the ongoing control measures that are required to prevent legionella build-up is the best way to make sure these procedures are consistently carried out. It is important that the person in control of your day to day legionella control has adequate training and understanding of the water systems they are responsible for as well as the budget to put any recommendations into action.

Providing awareness training to your employees gives them a deeper understanding of why these procedures have been put in place and can ensure reliability of them being carried out. Keeping records of every legionella management process is also important to keep your files up to date and accurate. Without adequate record keeping and evidence of your management procedures, and regular planned maintenance you are putting yourself and others at an elevated.

Your risk assessor should be able to advise on how often a legionella risk assessment needs to be carried out on your site. In some cases, these need to take place only every couple of years, but if your premises has high-risk features, risk assessments may need to be reviewed more frequently.

GET STARTED

At Total Water Solutions, we have the expertise to ensure your property is fully compliant and legionella risk is managed safely and fully. Get in touch today to find out more.



To find out more read our [case studies](#), or [contact us](#).





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how we can help you call us on
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