

INSTRUCTION 30

LEGIONELLA BACTERIA

References:

- A. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- B. Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations (as amended)
- C. The Control of Legionella Bacteria in Water Systems Approved Code of Practice (as amended)

Introduction

30.1 Legionnaires' Disease or Legionellosis is the term used for infections caused by Legionella pneumophila and other related bacteria. Legionella bacteria are only dangerous in respirable form and generally only to susceptible individuals where inhalation of the bacteria in aerosols or water droplets may cause severe pneumonia and, in extreme cases, death.

30.2 Legionella bacteria are widespread and found naturally in many aquatic environments, where they feed on algae and organic matter in sludge, sediment and silt. They tolerate a range of temperatures, although below 20°C and above 50°C they are dormant and above 60°C they will not survive.

30.3 When Legionella bacteria enter man-made water systems they may proliferate under favourable conditions. If water droplets are then created and dispersed into the atmosphere then people in the vicinity may be at risk of inhaling the bacteria. To eliminate or reduce the risk, control measures must be in place to prevent the proliferation of the organism in water systems, and to minimise the generation of water droplets and aerosols.

30.4 This Policy Statement sets out the arrangements for controlling Legionella in the Council's water systems, plant and specialist equipment, in accordance with Reference C.

Duty holders

Domestic hot and cold water systems

30.5 The control and management of Legionella in hot and cold water systems is a corporate responsibility and the role of Statutory Duty Holder rests with the Head of Operations. Reference C allows the Duty Holder to obtain assistance from a competent contractor, and the Council has engaged a specialist water treatment contractor.

Specialist departmental systems or equipment

30.6 Where departments possess and operate specialist water systems or equipment, which are independent of the domestic water supply and which present a potential Legionella exposure risk, then the departmental manager must take on the responsibilities of the Duty Holder, summarised below, and suitable arrangements must be in place to manage the risks. Specialist advice is available and departments who require assistance in fulfilling their duties should contact one of Assistant Surveyors in Property Services or the health and safety manager.

Responsibilities

30.7 The Assistant Director Operations and managers with specialist water systems are classed as the "Duty Holder" and are therefore to ensure:

- That suitable formal risk assessments are carried out, with suitable and sufficient documentation of findings, including schematics detailing the water systems under their control;
- Ongoing reviews and reassessment of Legionella exposure risk are undertaken at least biannually;
- That a risk minimisation programme, a prioritisation action plan and a mechanism for escalating remedial work where risk assessment and monitoring data indicate a risk;
- The implementation and management of the programme;
- The development of formal procedures for inspection, maintenance, treatment, cleaning and disinfection of hot and cold water systems according to the guidance set out in Reference C.
- That staff have the appropriate training;
- Suitable records are maintained.

30.8 Where risk assessment identifies a significant risk, the duty holder will arrange for the system to be disinfected immediately, either thermally or by chemical means. The system will then be monitored to ensure the efficacy of the treatment regime. If necessary, the regime will be modified until the risk of exposure to Legionella is reduced to acceptable limits.