

Factsheet 3

Legionella Risk Management in the Health and Care Sector



Most fatal cases of Legionnaires' disease, or indeed infection in the first instance, are with people who have a reduced immune capacity. The older we get and the less robust, the more susceptible we become, with men being 3 times more likely than women to fall ill. People with respiratory problems, lung disease, cancer, diabetes, smokers and heavy drinkers are amongst those most at risk.

It stands to reason, therefore, that GP surgeries, hospitals and care homes are in the front line when it comes to the importance of having safe and wholesome water supplies. Dental surgeries are also very important for protection.

New or old properties, Legionella does not discriminate, it's how you manage your water systems that matters. The bacteria are omnipresent in almost all manmade water systems despite utility company treatment of mains water. Where cold water temperature rises and hot water temperatures fall they can slip into the critical range of between 20-45°C which is ideal for bacterial growth. In healthcare facilities hot water at outlets is recommended to be 5°C higher than normal, which brings issues of potential scalding that need to be managed with the use of thermal mixing valves. If there are any nutrients in the system – sludge, debris, corrosion etc., bacteria will feed off this, it particularly thrives on rust.

THE LAW: Under Health and Safety at Work Regulations it is incumbent upon the building's owners to ensure that a Risk Assessment is undertaken, that identified risks are removed or mitigated to as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP) and that monitoring and maintenance of the systems (often more than one) is carried out routinely, robustly and logged as being done. It is common now for courts to issue fines into 6 and 7 figures where Legionnaires' cases occur, and even where there is no bacterium in the system, if it is not being managed properly. Legionella outbreaks are not only devastating for the people concerned, they can be catastrophic for businesses.

LEGIONELLOSIS: *Legionella pneumophila*, the most serious strain, "has a mortality rate between 10-12%. Those who do survive are likely to be very unwell. It is a highly debilitating disease, often leaving people deaf or blind, or with lost limbs because over the course of the illness they have gone into coma or they have suffered brain damage and it has affected their entire systems. Recovery can take 12 – 18 months. Often people do not ever recover fully due to complications" (Green, 2013).

PEACE OF MIND: An Aqua Legionella Risk Assessment will identify and assess the source of any risk, take samples for laboratory analysis and provide you with a complete 'toolkit' to prevent and/or control that risk. We help you to implement and manage the control programme and provide you with the means to keep records. More than that though, we are always here to offer guidance and answer questions - our support doesn't stop when we provide you with your bespoke report - which consists of...



1. Detailed Risk Assessment including schematics required by law
2. Management Summary Report - what you need to do in plain language
3. A Logbook based on your system
4. All of this in electronic format, plus legislation and guidance on a disc
5. A framed Certificate of Compliance *and peace of mind!*