



Technical Bulletin 02/2020

Covid 19 Water Hygiene Issues – V1

Effective from 31/03/20 until rescinded or replaced

Aim:

The aim of this bulletin is to highlight water hygiene considerations in buildings and on sites where reduced occupancy has significantly decreased water consumption with the potential to have a negative impact upon water hygiene (quality).

Applicable to:

All buildings and sites with reduced occupancy due to personnel working from home or deployed during the COVID-19 emergency measures. The following Regulations and ACoPs place a duty of care on the Employer to ensure a safe working environment for employees and visitors:

- **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations**
- **The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations**
- **Water Bylaws and Regulations**
- **Health and Safety at Work etc Act**
- **Building Act 1984**
- **ACOP L8 The Control of Legionella Bacteria in Water Systems**
- **HSG 274 The Control of Legionella Bacteria in Hot and Cold Water Systems.**

Situation:

Due to the COVID 19 situation the majority of MOD staff have been requested to work from home to comply with Government guidance, leaving building use for essential attendance only.

Decreased or nil attendance reduces water consumption resulting in water in the piped water system becoming more susceptible to bacterial growth which can cause illness. There is a need where applicable to evaluate the change of use and implement a management plan to minimise this risk.

Building Custodian Action:

It will be assumed that buildings that are occupied are subject to normal maintenance activities unless the MMO is advised or advises to the contrary. The building custodian is to:

- **Notify the Legionella Responsible Person of temporary change of use**
- **Identify buildings that are occupied and those that are not**
- **Agree an interim process of safeguarding whilst buildings are partially occupied**
- **Agree options for safe occupancy**



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Areas of Concern:

In partially occupied buildings - where there is a range of wash basins, water dispensers / fountains, showers, kitchens etc designed for full occupancy, only a small number will now be in use. This will result in reduced water flow, causing water being retained and stagnating within pipework. Chlorine can degrade allowing bacteria to proliferate.

In closed Buildings - there will be no water flow and the chlorine in the water will degrade allowing stagnation and bacterial proliferation. Changes in water composition can result in lead permeation from lead pipework leaching into the water supply. Staff returning to unoccupied buildings will be unsuspecting to the water quality changes and consumption of non potable water can lead to illness.

Staff Action: Internal procedures by staff in **part occupied buildings**:

- Use alternate basins in washrooms ensuring each are flushed at least weekly
- Flush showers preferably for 5 minutes or longer, at least once a week if not used regularly.
- Check all areas within the building for water outlets (including appliances) and ensure these outlets are flushed or appliances operated for a full wash cycle. Within kitchens areas run the water for at least 5 minutes prior to use.
- Mains fed drinking water cooler should not be used. When normal occupation resumes these should be appropriately flushed and the filters replaced.
- Do not use outside water taps until the system has been safely flushed.
- Tanked (high water pressure) water systems should be flushed at least 15 minutes. There is a need to change the tank stored water weekly
- Maintenance Management Organisation (MMO) to maintain potable and wholesome water. The maintenance will include all of the above and the flushing of the water mains monthly
- MMO is to ensure all statutory and Mandatory activities continue for legionella prevention
- Any changes of use must be notified to the MMO, including any further change of use from partial to fully closed and if access to the building is required, see *closed buildings* below.

For partial occupation of buildings it is assumed that the cleaning regime is maintained and that good hygiene and housekeeping standards remain in place. If this is not the case, further measures will be required such as cleansing and disinfecting taps and surfaces. Request confirmation from building custodian.



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Internal Procedures for closed buildings

Close the building and prohibit unauthorised entry. Where a building has been closed for less than a month a weekly flushing regime will need to be maintained prior to reoccupation.

Where the closure has been longer than a month, the MMO must be instructed to sterilise the water system (24 hour chlorination residue).

When the need to reactivate a closed building is identified formal prior notice must be given to the MMO so a flushing regime or sterilisation can be implemented.

DO NOT DRINK THE WATER AND NOTIFY LINE MANAGER AND MMO IF YOU IDENTIFY

- ANY DISCOLOURATION OF WATER
- CHANGE IN TASTE OF WATER
- CHANGE IN SMELL OF WATER
- ANY MICROPODS (microscopic shrimps 1mm TO 2 mm long) IN THE WATER
- ANY SEDIMENT IN THE WATER

IF YOU IDENTIFY THE ABOVE AND NEED TO CONTINUE TO OCCUPY THE BUILDING FOR OPERATIONAL PURPOSES DO THE FOLLOWING

- Drink bottled water
- Use bottled water to boil for hot drinks
- Sanitise hands with hand sanitiser
- Wipe down surfaces with antiseptic spray or wipes, adhering to contact times
- Do not use the shower
- Minimise atomisation from taps
- Close the toilet lid prior to flushing

For further advice please contact: DIO – Technical Services

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