

The background of the entire page is a high-speed photograph of water splashing, creating a dynamic and textured blue and white pattern. The water droplets and splashes are scattered across the page, with larger, more detailed splashes at the top and bottom edges, and smaller droplets in the center.

Letting Agent Guide to Legionella & Water Hygiene

This important guide aims to give you
information on what your legal obligations are
to control legionella in rented
accommodation.



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What is it?

Legionellosis is a collective term for diseases caused by legionella bacteria including the most serious Legionnaires' disease, as well as the similar but less serious conditions of Pontiac fever and Lochgillhead fever.

Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia and everyone is susceptible to infection. The risk increases with age but some people are at higher risk including:

- people over 45 years of age
- smokers and heavy drinkers
- people suffering from chronic respiratory or kidney disease
- diabetes, lung and heart disease
- anyone with an impaired immune system

The bacterium Legionella pneumophila and related bacteria are common in natural water sources such as rivers, lakes and reservoirs, but usually in low numbers.

They may also be found in purpose built water systems such as domestic hot and cold water systems, spa pools and evaporative condensers.

If conditions are favourable, the bacteria may grow increasing the risks of Legionnaires' disease and it is therefore important to control the risks by introducing appropriate measures outlined in:-

Legionnaires' disease - The control of legionella bacteria in water systems (ACOP L8)

www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l8.htm

Where does it come from?

Legionella bacteria are widespread in natural water systems, e.g. rivers and ponds.

However, the conditions are rarely right for people to catch the disease from these sources. Outbreaks of the illness occur from exposure to legionella growing in purpose built systems where water is maintained at a temperature high enough to encourage growth, e.g. hot and cold water systems, spa pools, cooling towers and evaporative condensers used in all sorts of premises (domestic, work and leisure).

How do people get it?

People contract Legionnaires' disease by inhaling small droplets of water (aerosols) suspended in the air containing the bacteria. Certain conditions increase the risk from legionella if:

- The water temperature in all or some parts of the system is between 20°C - 45°C, which is suitable for growth
- It is possible for breathable water droplets to be created and dispersed, e.g. aerosol created by shower heads, water outlets, spa baths
- Water is stored and/or re-circulated
- There are deposits that can support bacterial growth providing a source of nutrients for the organism, e.g. rust, sludge, scale, organic matter and biofilms e.g. in old cold water tanks
- Outlets are used infrequently
- The system contains dead ends or unused pipe work, e.g. hot water feed for cold fill only machine

Reducing the risk of Legionella

The risk of Legionella causing illness in well maintained, small domestic properties is normally very low.

Possibly the biggest risk is when tenants been away from the property for more than a week or so, e.g. on holiday, or there are additional taps/showers/toilets that are not used daily. Good practice in this situation is simply:

- Run the hot water taps (a very unlikely source anyway) for a minimum of 60 seconds.
- Flush shower heads for a minimum of 60 seconds (to do this, remove from holder before turning on the shower, then hold down over plug hole to lessen risk of inhaling sprayed droplets).
- Shower heads should be kept clean and free of scale - do not allow this to build up.
- Keep the hot water at a temperature of minimum 50°C - 60°C (at least once per day if you have a hot water storage cylinder)
- Flush the toilet twice to circulate fresh water through the system and empty the cistern



Why manage the risk?

The first question many agents and landlords ask is why has this legislation been introduced. There have been few if any confirmed reports of tenants becoming ill or dying from Legionnaires Disease contracted from rented properties.

Legionnaires' disease presents as pneumonia like symptoms, and people at a high risk from Legionnaires' are also at a high risk from pneumonia. Therefore Legionnaires' disease is not always diagnosed as the cause of illness or death and there are likely far higher instances of Legionnaires' disease than are recorded.

Most instances of Legionnaires Disease are not fatal or serious enough for patients to seek medical attention. It can feel similar to having a bad case of the flu, and generally clears up in a short time.

Managing the risk from legionella in rented properties requires a number of steps to be taken. Under health and safety legislation, the landlord is what is termed the Duty Holder, i.e. the person ultimately responsible for ensuring that legionella risk management takes place. The Duty Holder can appoint a Responsible Person to manage the risk from legionella, and in practice this will be their letting agent if they use one. See **HSG 274** Part 2 para 2.138 onwards for the details of this.

A thorough guide to Landlord responsibilities is available at:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/legionella-landlords-responsibilities.htm>

What Landlords Need to Do

The key actions which need to be carried out to manage legionella in rented properties areas follows;

1. Have a legionella risk assessment carried out on the property by a **competent** person i.e. someone experienced and knowledgeable to do so.
2. Implement appropriate measures to prevent or control risks from legionella in the property as recommended in the risk assessment.
3. Inform tenants of their role in managing the risk from legionella and what actions they should be taking.
4. Review the risk assessment periodically.
5. Carry out ongoing management of the risk from legionella, including checking water temperatures at inspections, ensuring shower heads and hoses are regularly cleaned, and flushing water systems while properties are empty over extended periods.

What Landlords DON'T Need to Do

1. Water sampling is not required – the assessment is RISK based.
2. You do not get a 'Legionella Certificate'.
3. You do not need to engage a consultant to undertake an assessment, however, the guidance is quite clear on what it regards as competency to undertake an assessment, and at a one off payment of £50 + VAT, Building Compliance Associates Ltd will give assurance of compliance.

4. An annual assessment is not required. The risk assessment will give details on any future requirements appropriate to the property. In many cases this will just be for the Landlord/Agent to evaluate any changes to the water system and check water temperatures.



Achieving Compliance.

The first step in legionella risk management is carrying out a risk assessment on a property. This involves a risk assessor visiting the property and inspecting the hot and cold water systems. Each risk assessment will include an assessment of the risk, an asset register, a legionella control programme and a water system schematic.

From this we will advise on any actions needed to reduce risk, which may include maintenance items. These should then be undertaken by your maintenance contractor, and you can then manage the legionella risk in the future.

We are always available to provide any follow up advice, and we charge a fixed fee of **£50 + VAT** for properties up to 4 bedrooms in size.



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Building Compliance Associates Ltd (BCA) was formed 5 years ago in response to demand from clients needing straight forward, competent and reliable support to ensure they are compliant with the many areas of building legislation that exist in the UK.

Often, those responsible for building management can be swamped with confusing and seemingly ambiguous legislative requirements. Our value for money surveys allow for a manageable action plan to be drawn up to facilitate compliance.

Our approach is one of full transparency, with all reports, draft reports, programmes, photographs, videos and other supporting documentation all available securely online, accessible from your web browser.

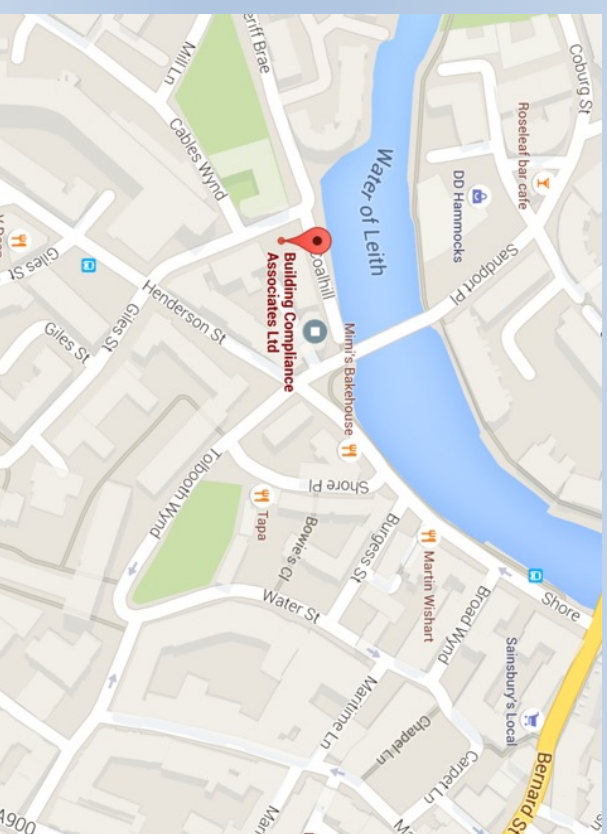
Our services comprise health and safety, asbestos management, fire, safety, environmental management and energy and carbon. These services can be supported by full building surveys and M&E condition surveys, carried out by qualified personnel. Our reports are fully bespoke, consistent in format and fully quality assured before final publication.

We also firmly believe in adding value through our survey and consultancy work. Often legislative compliance, when managed correctly, can also result in cost savings and increased comfort levels, or reduced maintenance costs. We approach every building with an open mind as to what can be achieved.

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Ensuring your safety

Owners and managers of private rented property have a legal duty of care to ensure that their tenants and visitors can use the property safely.

A risk assessment carried out at your property by Building Compliance Associates Ltd will give you proper control with identification of appropriate preventative measures.

By undertaking the assessment you:

- Identify and assess any risks
- Prevent or control the risks
- Keep thorough records
- Going forward, review the risks regularly



The Health & Safety Executive is the government body responsible for water hygiene and Legionnaires' disease.

Further advice and information can be viewed on their website. www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires



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www.easycompliance.co.uk

