

Recommissioning your property - managing Legionella risk

If you took the decision to restrict access to all or part of your property during the Coronavirus crisis – or to close it completely – you must manage your Legionella risk carefully before you reopen it for normal use.

Keeping it legal – legionella control is vital

The return to work will still fall under the remit of the Health and Safety at Work Act, and you have a legal requirement to manage the Legionella risk. From a microbiological perspective, the period between low use or decommissioning the system and bringing it into normal use is potentially the most hazardous.

As good as new

Before any water system that has had its usage restricted, or that has been drained down completely, is put back into use, the system should be recommissioned as though it were new. When recommissioning, you must protect the integrity of the system and its users against the risk of Legionella proliferation and exposure, and the possibility of contracting Legionnaires Disease.

Key requirements during recommissioning include:

- A new risk assessment. A full survey of the system including pipework, cold water storage tanks and hot water storage vessels should be carried out to determine if any remedial work is required following the changes to normal use.
- The cold-water system should be disinfected (either via the cold-water break and storage tanks or by mains injection) using stabilised silver hydrogen peroxide, which should then be flushed fully through the system. This method of chemical disinfection will break down potential biofilms, including Legionella, within the system.
- Hot water systems should be disinfected by cold water down service or by thermal disinfection. Thermal disinfection is achievable by raising the temperature to 70°C+ and allowing to circulate within the distribution system for at least 1 hour.
- Water treatment plant such as water softeners and dosing equipment should be serviced and salt/chemical stocks replenished.
- The storage tanks, hot water vessels and sentinel outlets should be sampled for Legionella prior to the recommissioning of the system to ensure the above tasks have been sufficient to remove the harmful risk.

Ongoing risk management

You must remain vigilant in managing your legionella risk as an ongoing task. There can be no let up on compliance once the Coronavirus crisis has passed, as Legionnaires Disease is itself a potentially fatal illness and a major public health concern.

If you are in any doubt as to whether you can complete all these tasks effectively; or need any help with your risk assessment or ongoing legionella risk control measures; please contact our experts for assistance. We are members of the Legionella Control Association (LCA), so with Swiftclean you are in safe hands.

Please call us on 0800 243 471 or email legionellasupport@swiftclean.co.uk for a free quotation and further guidance.