

Advice for LCA Members for Legionella Control During the COVID-19 Outbreak



We have received reports of service providers being turned away from site due to concerns over COVID-19. The Health and Safety at Work Act still applies in the current situation and as such an employer or those in control of premises must continue to manage any risk arising from their activity and this includes legionella control.

While controls in place may need to be adapted to changing circumstances, Dutyholders must still be able to demonstrate control of risk to a reasonably practicable level. Dutyholders are less likely to have access to competent help on site while adapting control measures due to social distancing and self-isolation.

Many legionella control activities are monitoring measures rather than interventions and there may be some flexibility in how these are maintained during the COVID-19 situation. Other systems may require interventions by service providers to remain safe and these should not be neglected. Each system should be considered individually by the Dutyholder.

Our advice to LCA members is to follow the latest government advice available at www.gov.uk (<https://www.gov.uk/>) on measures to take and how to work.

There is a significant element of work by LCA members that must be completed on site and is likely to be time critical. In this respect it is essential travel and should continue unless alternative arrangements have been made. Unless there is reason for individuals to stop working, staff should take the appropriate hand washing, social distancing and other recommended measures and continue these essential activities. It may be helpful to offer reassurance to your clients on the measures you have in place to minimise spread of COVID-19.

Where you are faced with clients not allowing you to perform legionella control measures, we suggest the following actions are taken:

1. Make sure your clients are aware of their responsibilities under the law and how their actions may be compromising their control of legionella - do this in writing

2. Offer pragmatic solutions if possible, to ensure ongoing control including safe shutdown of water systems if a building is to be closed - particularly for evaporative cooling systems
3. Document all of the communication around any refusal of site access for any future prosecution or LCA audit to demonstrate that you have done all of the above
4. Advise on what is needed to safely recommission water systems when buildings reopen

If there is a situation where there is significant risk, we recommend following the LCA escalation guidance and notifying the HSE or LA EHO if no action is taken by the Dutyholder.

Specific Guidance for Evaporative Cooling Systems

Evaporative cooling systems are likely to require intervention to remain safe such as replacing chemical stocks, adjusting dosing levels and calibration of sensors. They should also be decommissioned properly rather than simply switched off, to minimise legionella risk when they are recommissioned.

If, as a service provider, you are prevented from working on evaporative cooling systems by the Dutyholder and you are aware that systems are running without adequate levels of control you should immediately escalate the situation and consider notifying the relevant enforcement agency.

Advice to Give to Service Users for Return to Normal Operation

If buildings or water systems are isolated during the COVID-19 outbreak, the length of time involved may not have been known at the outset and control measures might not have been considered. Staff may not have been available to flush to simulate usage. Assess the risk – it is unlikely that buildings can simply be reopened with no additional measures.

Start-up procedures for systems may need to be reconsidered before buildings can be reopened.

Consideration should be given to water system cleaning and disinfection and/or controlled flushing to mitigate the risk from prolonged stagnation. Sampling may be useful to demonstrate effectiveness of control measures.

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