

Guidance for flushing infrequently used outlets

Your water system should be regularly cleaned, monitored and operated at temperatures to provide conditions that prevent the growth of the bacteria that cause Legionnaires Disease.

This can be achieved by maintaining a supply hot water temperature of at least 60°C from the heat source and or hot storage vessel, with the cold water below 20°C.

There is a possibility that bacteria might start to grow in parts of the water system when infrequently used and is most likely to occur in pipes connected directly to shower heads or taps.

Therefore consideration should be given to removing infrequently used showers and taps in an approved manner.

Shower heads or taps should be flushed through on a weekly basis and this should ensure that any contamination that might occur is kept at a low level. The first 30 seconds to 1 minute flush is the period of greatest risk and staff should avoid contact with spray from outlets during this period.

Flushing procedure

The following is a summary of actions that should be undertaken in order to facilitate the flushing of outlets that are considered to be infrequently used. Infrequent use is explained as an outlet used less than once per week. Where there are concerns that temperatures during flushing are maintained between 20°C – 50°C then consideration should be given to obtaining a legionella sample and risk assessment of the site due the increased risk.

Target Audience

This guidance is for staff working in any operational premises.

Action Required

Identify all voids.

Identify taps including baths or garden taps / shower heads / toilets that are used less than once per week. Add all identified infrequently used outlets on to the flushing log. This log is a live document and will change as outlet use varies.

Showers

Showerheads are designed to produce spray so the ***shower head must be removed before flushing*** is commenced. Following removal of the shower head the hose can be laid on the floor of the shower tray or the bath and then water discharged from the outlet. Initially run the water at a low rate of flow for 1 minute (to reduce bacterial levels) then increase the flow rate.

Showers with fixed heads should have the showerhead inserts removed if possible, if this is not the case ensure you minimise the exposure to aerosols.

Using a calibrated thermometer, run water from both hot and cold supplies through the showerhead until the temperature stabilises and is comparable to supply water. The time taken to flush each shower will be dependent on the length of pipework that is in infrequent use.

Taps

Using a calibrated thermometer, run water from both hot and cold supplies, through the tap(s) until the temperature stabilises and is comparable to supply water. The time taken to flush each outlet will be dependent on the length of pipework that is in infrequent use. The water should be run at a flow rate to minimise excessive aerosols.

Recording of actions

All actions should be recorded. The person carrying out the flushing must fill out the flushing sheet and sign it. Sheets to be stored in the site log book along with any other relevant information observed at time of flushing

