

LEGIONELLA 101

A GUIDE FOR BUILDING OWNERS & MANAGERS

Legionella is a naturally occurring bacterium found in water. When water systems are not properly managed, *Legionella* can grow and spread through water droplets, potentially causing serious illness. This guide explains what you need to know—and what you can do to protect your building and its occupants.

AUGUST IS
**LEGIONELLA
AWARENESS
MONTH**



WHAT IS LEGIONELLA?

Legionella is a type of bacteria found in natural freshwater environments. It can grow in manmade water systems when conditions are right—such as warm water, stagnation, sediment, and biofilm.



WHAT IS LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE?

Legionnaires' disease is a serious form of pneumonia caused by *Legionella* bacteria. Symptoms can include fever, cough, shortness of breath, muscle aches, and fatigue. It is **not** spread from person to person.



WHERE DOES LEGIONELLA GROW?

Legionella can grow in building water systems, including:

- Cooling towers
- Domestic hot water systems
- Decorative fountains
- Ice machines
- Hot tubs and spas
- Misters and humidifiers



HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Legionella spreads through water droplets small enough to be inhaled deeply into the lungs. This can happen when contaminated water is aerosolized into the air (e.g., mist, spray, or steam).



WHO IS AT RISK?

Anyone can get sick, but certain groups are at higher risk, including:

- People 50 years and older
- People with chronic lung disease
- Current or former smokers
- People with weakened immune systems

WHAT YOU CAN DO



DEVELOP A WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

A written plan helps identify risks, set control measures, and ensure ongoing monitoring.



CONTROL TEMPERATURES

Keep hot water hot ($\geq 120^{\circ}\text{F}$ / 49°C) and cold water cold ($\leq 68^{\circ}\text{F}$ / 20°C).



PREVENT STAGNATION

Flush rarely used outlets regularly and maintain continuous system circulation.



CLEAN AND MAINTAIN SYSTEMS

Regularly clean and disinfect cooling towers, fountains, and other water features.



MONITOR AND VERIFY

Test water as appropriate to verify your control measures are effective.



KEEP GOOD RECORDS

Document maintenance, monitoring results, corrective actions, and training.



PROACTIVE MANAGEMENT. HEALTHY BUILDINGS.

A well-managed water system protects your occupants, reduces risk, and helps ensure regulatory compliance.



Partner with a qualified water treatment professional for assessments, testing, and water management support.



**WATER IS ESSENTIAL.
SAFE WATER IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS.**

Learn more about *Legionella* and water safety at

www.awt.org