

HOME BUILDING SURVEY

LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE – GENERAL ADVICE

The Health and Safety Executive Approved Code of Practice L8 on Legionnaires' Disease advises that organisations or individuals who provide residential accommodation or who are responsible for the water system in the premises are required to ensure that the risk of exposure to Legionella in the premises is properly controlled. Legionella bacteria can cause this pneumonia-like illness and can be potentially fatal especially to people at higher risk of health problems. **This guidance is given with the best intentions but nothing in this advice shall create or be deemed to create any obligations whether expressed or implied.**

WHAT FEATURES IN A BUILDING PRESENT A RISK

Stored water where the temperature in some part of the system is between 20 degrees and 45 degrees centigrade. There are sources of nutrients such as rust, sludge, scale and organic matter. It is possible for contaminated water droplets to be produced by shower outlets.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The landlord or an external consultant should carry out a risk assessment to include: - 1] Any potential risk sources. 2] Any controls currently in place to reduce risks. 3] Monitoring, inspection and maintenance procedures. 4] Records of the monitoring results, inspection and checks carried out. 5] Specify a review date.

WHAT SORT OF WORK HAS TO BE DONE TO MINIMISE RISKS

Hot water temperature must reach at least 60 degrees centigrade. The cold water in the system must stay below 20 degrees centigrade. Water tanks should be checked for debris and should have tight fitting lids. Dirty tanks should be cleaned out and the system flushed through. Water outlets, taps and showers which are not used frequently could be at risk and in some cases these may have to be used weekly to remove stagnant water. Where pipes and outlets are no longer required, the dead leg of pipework should be cut back. All shower heads should be removed, cleaned and disinfected every three months.

INFORMATION - Note for Legal Adviser when you are purchasing a property

If your client intends to rent out the property you should check that the building conforms to the Health and Safety Executives Approved Code of Practice L8 on Legionnaires Disease – the control of Legionella bacteria in water systems L8 dated 2012.

WHAT ABOUT OWNER OCCUPIERS?

Legionnaires Disease could affect home owners in exactly the same way as it affects tenants. The only difference is that legislation does not impose a duty on home owners to take suitable precautions to prevent or control the risk of exposure to Legionella. The same features in the building present a risk as with a tenanted home.

In my experience this problem is rare in my survey area. If you wish to be totally sure the system is safe, you should appoint an appropriately qualified person to carry out a risk assessment and recommend any remedial work. This is not part of a Chartered Surveyors Homebuilding Survey.

04/10/2016