

# Fast Track Inventories

# Legionella Risk Assessment



## What is Legionella?

Legionellosis is a collective term for diseases caused by Legionella bacteria including the most serious Legionnaires' disease. Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia and everyone is susceptible to infection. However the risk increases with age, together with some medical and social conditions therefore some people will be at higher risk. People contract Legionnaires' disease by inhaling small droplets of water (aerosols), suspended in the air, containing the bacteria.

Legionnaires' disease came to prominence in 1976 when it got into the air conditioning towers of a hotel in the United States hosting the American Legion Annual three day convention. Within a week, more than 130 people had been hospitalised and 25 had died (Wikipedia 1976\_Philadelphia\_Legionnaires'\_disease\_outbreak). The most recent outbreak in August 2015 in New York has to date led to 12 deaths. In the UK there have also been outbreaks, including one in Edinburgh in 2012 which killed 4 people.

The bacterium Legionella pneumophila and related bacteria are common in natural water sources such as rivers, lakes and reservoirs, but usually in low numbers. Whilst the bacteria at low levels do not pose a health risk, under certain conditions, for example, in water storage tanks, showerheads and in certain temperature ranges, the bacteria can multiply increasing the risk of Legionnaires' Disease.

The risk of Legionella increases in water systems which are unused for any period of time which can make **rental properties particularly vulnerable**.

If conditions are favourable, the bacteria may grow increasing the risks of Legionnaires' disease and it is therefore imperative to control the risks by introducing appropriate measures.



## **Your responsibility**

**Section 28 of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, regarding Legionella Risk Assessment, extends to residential rental properties. There is a need by those with the responsibility of owning or managing residential rental properties to demonstrate compliance.**

“A risk assessment must be carried out to identify and assess the exposure to Legionella bacteria from water systems on the premises and any precautionary measures needed. The duty holder is responsible for ensuring the risk assessment is carried out” .

Legionnaires’ Disease is a public health threat which, in the past, has spread panic when its bacteria has entered the water or air conditioning systems of large public buildings such as hospitals and hotels. The UK’s Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recently extended its regulations covering the control of the disease to privately rented properties.

### **What does this mean for Landlords and Letting Agents?**

As an employer, or a person in control of the premises, you are responsible for health and safety and need to take the right precautions to reduce the risks of exposure to Legionella.

It is a recommendation that a Legionella Risk Assessment should be carried out every two years to meet the legal duty in ensuring that the risk of exposure to tenants is properly assessed and controlled. In addition, preventative and control measures must be implemented to eliminate risks and records should be maintained and reviewed regularly.

Fast Track Inventories are City & Guilds trained to provide checks of the water system in residential properties. The risk assessment will indicate whether any action is required on the part of the Landlord and if not, is a record demonstrating compliance in protecting tenants.



**What Fast Track Inventories can offer:**

- ◆ an efficient and reliable service producing a Legionella Risk Assessment report with supporting photographs. This could be a stand alone service or could be undertaken at the same time as an Inventory
- ◆ a report identifying any risks which need addressing
- ◆ Landlords and Letting Agents a way of demonstrating compliance
- ◆ peace of mind at a competitive price, saving you precious time and training costs

**To book a Legionella Risk Assessment please email-**  
[info@fasttrackinventories.co.uk](mailto:info@fasttrackinventories.co.uk)

**For further information regarding compliance on this topic please visit the Health and Safety Executive website -**  
[www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/index.htm)



## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Do I need a risk assessment if I have a Combi boiler?**

Yes, as the boiler controls the water temperature, legionella bacteria survives in water above 20 degrees and below 60 degrees it is therefore essential that the boiler is set at the correct temperature.

### **What if my property is divided into separate units e.g. flats?**

**Yes, every flat would need to have an assessment as they would have various water outlets that would need to be tested for temperature and cleanliness.**

### **My property has a communal cold water storage tank?**

In addition to each individual property needing a risk assessment, the person responsible for the whole building would need to arrange for a Legionella Risk Assessment for the communal water supply also.

### **Is this legislation?**

No law has been passed regarding Legionella, however there is a legal duty via the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for the “responsible person” for the property to ensure the safety of their tenants and if there is an outbreak of Legionella they could be fined or imprisoned.

### **How often does a risk assessment need to take place?**

As a minimum, an assessment needs to be carried out every two years.

### **Do I have to act on the recommendations of the Legionella Risk Assessment?**

Yes, the “responsible person” has a duty to fulfil and control their responsibility as per the Health and Safety Executive to ensure the safety of their tenants.

