

L1

Legionella: Procedure for flushing infrequently used taps

Description

This method statement is for the flushing of infrequently used taps within the building; specifically hot and cold water taps. An infrequently used tap is a tap that is not used for a period equal to or greater than seven days.

Why? Legionella bacteria is commonly found in water. The bacteria multiply where temperatures are between 20-45°C and nutrients are available. Infection can occur when water droplets containing the legionella bacteria are inhaled; this can lead to flu-like illnesses that in extreme cases can be fatal. Legionella can multiply in hot and cold water systems. Removing or flushing infrequently used taps can significantly reduce the risk of legionella.

Where? All infrequently used taps must be flushed, including taps found within fume cupboards.

When? Weekly

Who? Technical staff are responsible for the flushing of taps in teaching laboratories. The Laboratory Responsible Persons (as identified on the lab H&S signage) are responsible for ensuring taps are flushed within their own areas of responsibility (e.g. research labs, offices with taps etc.). A person should be assigned to flush taps in unoccupied areas.

Removal/ draining down? Can the tap be removed from system? If yes, then this is the preferred option. Removal should be arranged through Estates & Facilities Management (E&FM).

Water temperature? Cold water should be below 20°C. Hot water should usually be above 50°C (or 55°C in health care facilities). We are not asking you to test the running water temperature in your labs, however if you suspect there is a temperature problem after running the tap for one minute, please contact E&FM.

Procedure

- Identify all infrequently used taps within the room, including those inside fume cupboards. Identify their location using a green tag (available from stores).
- Ensure the taps can be flushed into an appropriate container if not plumbed for drainage.
- Ensure that the running of water from outlets does not create an unnecessary amount of aerosol. Run slowly for the first minute, then increase the flow to the normal rate. (On the first occasion only, if the tap has not been used for a long time, you can use plastic tubing to slowly run the water directly into the drain).
- Run taps continuously for 5 minutes.
- Record the flushing of the taps within the room on the LE1 form.
- Store the LE1 forms within the room.



All showers (including emergency showers) and eye wash stations will be flushed weekly by the University's approved contractor. They will also dismantle, clean and descale removable parts, heads, inserts and hoses, where fitted, on a quarterly basis (or as necessary).

If for any reason you suspect a shower outlet or eye wash station is not being flushed then please contact E&FM.

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Legislation:

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH)

Legionnaires Disease – The control of legionella bacteria in water systems. Approved Code of Practice & Guidance L8

Further reading

- HSE: Legionnaires' disease a brief guide for duty holders
- HSE: Legionnaires' disease. Part 2: The control of legionella bacteria in hot and cold water systems
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/legionnaires-disease/>

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