

Essential measures for safe reopening of water systems in unoccupied or partially closed buildings

By now, we're all aware of the risks from pathogenic bacteria caused by underutilised water systems as a result of the recent lockdowns. Now that we have our roadmap out of the pandemic and buildings begin to fully reopen with building and FM managers' workloads increasing as a result, we've highlighted key processes that will be critical to ensuring water systems are opened safely and further outbreaks of disease are prevented.

Control legionella bacteria in your water systems

The below steps are critical to control harmful bacteria in your water systems and effectively manage any immediate risks to health.

- 01** Two/three weeks prior to reopening a building (or a previously unused part of a building)
- 02** Immediately prior to reopening
- 03** Within three months of reopening



Continue to implement (and record) a strict daily flushing regime of all outlets

All outlets to be flushed on a daily basis to mimic normal operational use. This must be recorded and logged, as enforcement agencies are inspecting water meter readings to establish that flushing has been undertaken.



Conduct validation sampling

Due to prolonged period of fluctuating occupancy levels, validation for sampling should be undertaken from strategic points across the water system to establish the efficacy of your flushing regime.



Plan for recommissioning disinfection of your entire water system

If your water samples indicate the presence of legionella bacteria, consult with a water hygiene specialist for a suite of supplementary samples and/or targeted or system-wide disinfection.

Where buildings have been closed or kept open at very low occupancy levels, plan for a system-wide chemical disinfection before fully re-opening and undertake further validation sampling to demonstrate that your building is safe to use.

Where buildings have remained open, and flushing has been implemented with slight reduction in occupancy, consider precautionary disinfection before fully re-opening the building.

precautionary disinfection before fully re-opening the building.



Review your water hygiene/ legionella risk assessment

As instructed by Health & safety Executive during lockdown, risk assessments should be reviewed to ensure they are current and have addressed the change in circumstances as a result of the Covid pandemic.

As part of the review, you should consider the following:

- Has your building's water system usage changed?
- Has a flushing and sampling regime been implemented?
- Has the susceptibility of your occupants changed? Is there an immediate risk to health?
- Are the current control measures sufficient?
- Have all remedial actions previously identified been addressed?

Churchill Environmental delivers a full range of environmental compliance services including water treatment and Legionella control. Our expert teams will work with you to recommend and implement the best disinfection and sampling regimes for your water systems to protect the health and safety of your returning building occupants.