



November 25, 2024

Subject: DAL DACF 24-25  
Title: Best Practices to Prevent *Legionella*

Dear Adult Care Facility Administrator:

This letter provides guidance on managing building water systems to help prevent Legionnaires' disease among adult care facility residents. Legionnaires' disease is a severe and often deadly form of pneumonia caused by inhaling aerosolized water droplets contaminated with the bacteria *Legionella*. A person diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease is not a threat to others in shared spaces because the bacteria are not spread person-to-person and while most people exposed to *Legionella* do not fall ill, because some adult care facilities serve individuals over the age of 50 and/or more medically complex individuals who are at greater risk to develop Legionnaires' disease, we recommend following standard prevention practices.

*Legionella* thrive in warm water environments typically found in complex building water systems. Water temperatures between roughly 70°F and 120°F are most conducive to *Legionella* growth. Common exposure points for *Legionella* include cooling towers, showers, faucets, hot tubs and whirlpool spas, respiratory therapy equipment, and room air humidifiers. Risk factors for *Legionella* proliferation include construction, water main breaks, changes in water treatments, water pH balance, equipment changes, water temperature fluctuations, scale and sediment, and stagnation. If one or more persons become sick with facility-associated Legionnaires' disease, the local health department, in conjunction with the Department's environmental health staff, can provide guidance. Adult care facilities are also encouraged to consult with an experienced water treatment specialist.

The Department of Health ("Department") recommends the following water management practices, which are not to be considered all-inclusive:

- Store hot water at temperatures above 140°F. Recirculate hot water continuously, if possible.
- Store and circulate cold water at temperatures below the growth range, ideally below 65°F.
- Flush low-flow piping runs and dead legs at least weekly.
- Flush infrequently used fixtures (e.g., vacant rooms, emergency showers) regularly as needed to maintain water quality parameters within control limits.
- Drain shower hoses after use and store them hanging down.
- Ensure disinfectant residual is detectable throughout the potable water system.
- Regularly monitor chemical levels in cooling towers and hot tubs.
- Clean and maintain water system components, such as thermostatic mixing valves, aerators, showerheads, hoses, filters, and storage tanks, regularly.
- Consider testing for *Legionella* annually.
- Develop and follow a water management plan specific to your facility and its water system.

The key to preventing Legionnaires' disease is water system maintenance and rigorous adherence to guidelines for appropriate temperatures and chemical treatment of water. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides a [worksheet and toolkit](#) to identify if your

facility is at increased risk for *Legionella* and best practices to consider when developing a water management program. They also offer a free, self-paced [training course](#) on *Legionella* in building water systems. Additionally, templates, guidance on sampling and remediation, and other resources that may be useful to adult care facilities can be found on the [Department's public website](#).

As a reminder, please contact your local health department if multiple residents are hospitalized with the same illness or symptoms. To help protect your residents, we strongly encourage you to become familiar with Legionnaires' disease, your facility's water system, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention worksheet and toolkit, and the Department's *Legionella* resources, and to implement control measures that are right for your facility's specific needs. If you have any questions, please write to [acinfo@health.ny.gov](mailto:acinfo@health.ny.gov).

Sincerely,



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