

Legionella can occur when water is stagnate for long periods of time. The bacteria can form where droplets of water remain stagnant. During this unprecedented closure of our church buildings, the risks of this happening are increased. As some churches are now planning for reopening, it is important that this risk is taken very seriously as part of the overall 'Reopening Buildings Checklist'.

If the water system has not been flushed weekly as described below, then a test is essential before re-opening the building. Even if accepted practice has been followed as outlined below, within church buildings of varying ages and conditions, there may still remain some risk, and therefore it is very strongly advised that a test is carried out before reopening. This should be considered as part of any checks and risk assessments and is a decision for the Managing Trustees.

Further guidance about [Legionella and Landlord's Responsibility](#) can be found on HSE's website.

Tests

If the managing trustees choose to have a test, the simplest test would be to gather 2 samples - one where the water enters the building and one where it exits. Please note that it is advisable to discuss if this is sufficient with the local service provider as each water system is different. [Legionella Control](#) have set out of code of conduct which would help in finding a suitable service provider.

Tests can take up to ten days to be analysed and during this time water outlets producing mist shouldn't be used. If the test is positive for either bacteria, then a chemical flush can be arranged.

Checklist for Weekly Flush

Here is a checklist for a weekly flush to prevent legionella:

1. All water systems should be flushed on a weekly basis.
2. All hot water storage systems should be switched off (but not drained) and flushed to prevent the storage of hot / warm water.
3. All taps (hot and cold) should be run at half pressure for 5 minutes each at every flushing.
4. All outside taps should be run at half pressure for 5 minutes each at every flushing.
5. All toilets should be flushed twice at every flushing.

6. All showers should be run for 5 minutes each at every flushing (ideally run these into a bucket to prevent mist and droplets being breathed in by the tester).
7. All hot water boilers should be run and flushed through at every flushing.
8. All dishwashers should be run and flushed through at every flushing.
9. Any other water appliance should be flushed (i.e. washing machines).
10. If a church has air conditioning and condensers then they should take separate advice from their maintenance contractor.
11. All inspections and flushing operations should be recorded on a [register](#).

Safety precautions

If a building has remained empty for a period of time, then there is a risk that the systems are infected. Therefore when flushing the systems, ensure that spray and water particles aren't breathed in (wear a mask or stand well clear of the running water and run showers heads into buckets or containers).

*Updated 7 July 2020