

# Legionnaires' Disease (Legionella) Guide for Landlords and Agents

## What is Legionnaires' disease?

Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal lung infection that is caused when individuals inhale the legionella bacteria. The bacteria can exist in any man-made water system such as water tanks, taps, showers, air conditioning units etc. Certain conditions increase the risk of legionella growth and Legionnaires' disease.

### **Legionella facts:**

- Legionella can grow in water temperature between 20- 45°C,
- Legionella can be dispersed through breathable water droplets
- Where water is stored and/ or recirculated there is a higher risk of legionella growth
- The build-up of rust, sludge, scale and other deposits in water systems can support bacterial growth

## **Legionnaires' disease can cause long term health problems.**

Early symptoms of Legionnaires' disease include muscle aches, tiredness, headaches, dry cough and fever.

## Legionnaires' disease and your Rent Smart Wales Licence

Your licence conditions state that you must comply with the 'Code of Practice for Licensed Landlords and Agents' licensed under Part 1 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014'. The code requires you to ensure the properties you rent out are kept in a safe condition, and with no unacceptable risk to the health of your tenants.

This means that:

- ✓ You need to be aware of the potential danger that legionella poses, and
- ✓ You must ensure that you assess and mitigate the risk from exposure to Legionella to ensure the safety of your tenants.



## Your responsibilities

Legionella must be managed appropriately due to the danger it poses. You will need to ensure that, at a minimum, a legionella risk assessment is completed for each property to identify any potential risks from legionella growth. This risk assessment will then enable you to implement measures to manage, prevent or control the risk of any legionella growth in the future.

### **Be aware**

Risk assessments must be regularly reviewed.  
Records must be kept of the control measures you have implemented.



Simple control measures can help manage the risk of exposure to legionella, measures include but are not limited to:

- ✓ Flushing the water system before letting the property
- ✓ Avoiding debris getting into the system
- ✓ Setting control parameters (e.g: setting the temperature to ensure water is stored at 60°C)
- ✓ Ensuring any redundant pipework is removed
- ✓ Advising tenants to regularly clean and disinfect showerheads.

### **Be aware**

The risk of Legionella growth may increase where the property is unoccupied for a period of time (for example: student lets). Additional control measures may be necessary in these properties.

### **Tenant Advice**

Tenants should be advised of any control measures that have been put in place and that need to be maintained. This could include not adjusting temperature settings on the calorifier, cleaning showerheads regularly and informing you of any issues with the hot water system.

### **Case Study**

A landlord received fines and costs of £404,886.90 for a total of 28 offences in respect two properties containing self-contained flats. One of the offences identified was that a hot water supply tank was not sealed with a lid, exposing the occupants to the risk of vermin, insects and infectious organisms such as Legionella bacteria.