

Clergy Housing Guidance on Legionnaires' disease

Background information

Legionella bacteria are naturally occurring inhabitants of moist environments, including ponds, lakes and rivers. The bacteria cannot be eradicated, but can be controlled. Since the bacteria are widespread in the environment, they are sometimes found in domestic water supplies. Outbreaks can occur from purpose-built water systems where conditions allow growth of the bacteria.

Legionella bacteria require certain conditions in which to grow. These include;

- a) water temperature of 20 – 45°C;
- b) a supply of nutrients such as other bacteria, algae, sediment and/or sludge within the system.

Infection occurs by breathing in water droplets containing the bacteria, and can not be acquired from drinking contaminated water or from person-to-person spread. Infection with *Legionella* species can result in either of two forms of illness; Pontiac fever, an acute flu-like illness which last about 1 week and has no long term effects, or Legionnaires' disease, a form of pneumonia which may be fatal. The risk of Legionnaires' disease occurring in single dwellings is extremely small.

Management of Water Systems

Management of water systems requires a step by step approach:

- Step 1 – Risk assessment
- Step 2 – Alterations to the system, where appropriate
- Step 3 – Regular management of the system

The responsibility for these steps falls on both PSD and the occupants of houses as set out below.

Steps 1 & 2 will be undertaken by Diocesan Surveyors at Quinquennial Inspections or Ingoing Schemes as appropriate.

Step 3: Regular management of the system

The regular management of the system is essential to minimise the potential risk. This is the responsibility of the occupant and includes the following;

1. **Taps:** Any taps not used within a seven day period should be flushed for 2 minutes on a weekly basis avoiding splashing to minimise creation of water droplets.
2. **Showers:** Any shower not used within a seven day period should be flushed for 2 minutes on a weekly basis. The shower head should be removed and the shower hose placed directly over drain outlet.
3. **Toilets:** Any toilet not used within a seven day period should be flushed with the lid down each week.
4. **Water features:** Any ornamental water features should be subjected to regular maintenance and monitoring. Any system which has been unused for a period of greater than seven days should be flushed through. Minimisation of water spray can be achieved by placing a refuse sack over the spray head.