

# SAFETY IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY



## LEGIONELLA

As an employer it is YOUR responsibility to ensure that measures are in place to safeguard the health and safety of your employees and anyone else who may be affected as a result of the business undertaking.

### ADVICE TO EMPLOYERS

Leeds City Council's Environmental Health Services can offer advice to local employers on the prevention of legionnaires disease. It is hoped that by promoting awareness of the illness and helping employers to recognise potential risks, the incidence of Legionnaires disease can be minimised.

#### WHAT IS LEGIONNAIRES DISEASE?

- Legionnaires disease is a potentially fatal pneumonia caused by legionella bacteria. It is spread by breathing in small droplets of water containing the bacteria, but cannot be passed from person to person or through drinking contaminated water.

#### WHO IS AT RISK?

- Anyone who is exposed to Legionella bacteria can be at risk. However, groups at higher risk from the disease include the over 45's, smokers, and those with respiratory or kidney disease.

Legionella bacteria are widespread in the environment and may contaminate and grow in water systems such as cooling towers, sprinkler systems and hot and cold water services. Evaporative condensers and wet cooling towers, found in many air conditioning systems, must by law be registered with the local authority. Health and safety inspectors may visit all such sites and need to be satisfied that they are designed, operated and maintained so as to control the risk of infection.

Further advice overleaf →

## ASSESSING THE RISK AND GETTING ADVICE ON PREVENTION

It is the responsibility of the employer, or person in control of the premises, to carry out a risk assessment of any water systems present on site in order to establish if there is a risk of legionella.



Above: The cooling towers in wet air-conditioning systems need to be treated regularly to prevent Legionella.

### The risk is likely to be greatest where:

- water temperatures are between 20 and 45°C
- there is a build up of scale/ sediment in tanks
- metal pipes, tanks or fittings are used;
- it is possible for spray to be generated;
- people may come into contact with the water droplets

If your risk assessment helps you to decide that there is no significant risk from legionella in your workplace, then you need take no further action except to periodically review the assessment in case of changes.

However, if a risk from legionella is identified, **suitable and sufficient measures must be taken to remove the risk**. Prevention and protection depend on proper understanding, and management of such water systems, and may involve the dosing of water tanks with preventative chemicals.

- For further information, the Health & Safety Commission has issued an official guide for all those managing cooling towers and similar systems. Entitled “**Legionnaires disease: The Control of Legionella Bacteria in Water Systems**”, it is priced £8 and is available from HSE books at [www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk) and all HMSO bookshops.
- A free of charge guide for employers and self assessment audit sheets are available from the Health and Safety section of Leeds City Council on 0113 24-77791.

For further advice on preventing Legionnaires disease, or any other aspect of health and safety at work, you can contact the Health and Safety section of Environmental Health Services on **(0113) 24-77791** or [env.health@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:env.health@leeds.gov.uk)