



The Complete Guide to Legionella Risk Assessments

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How do legionella risk assessments work?

A legionella risk assessment is a comprehensive system check that should be carried out every two years. It's carried out by a qualified assessor, who will:



Map out your water system

By following pipework a risk assessor comprehensively maps out your water system, creating a detailed asset list of every component.



Take water temperatures

They'll then record water temperatures throughout, as legionella bacteria prefer water temperatures of between 20–45°C.



Identify areas of risk

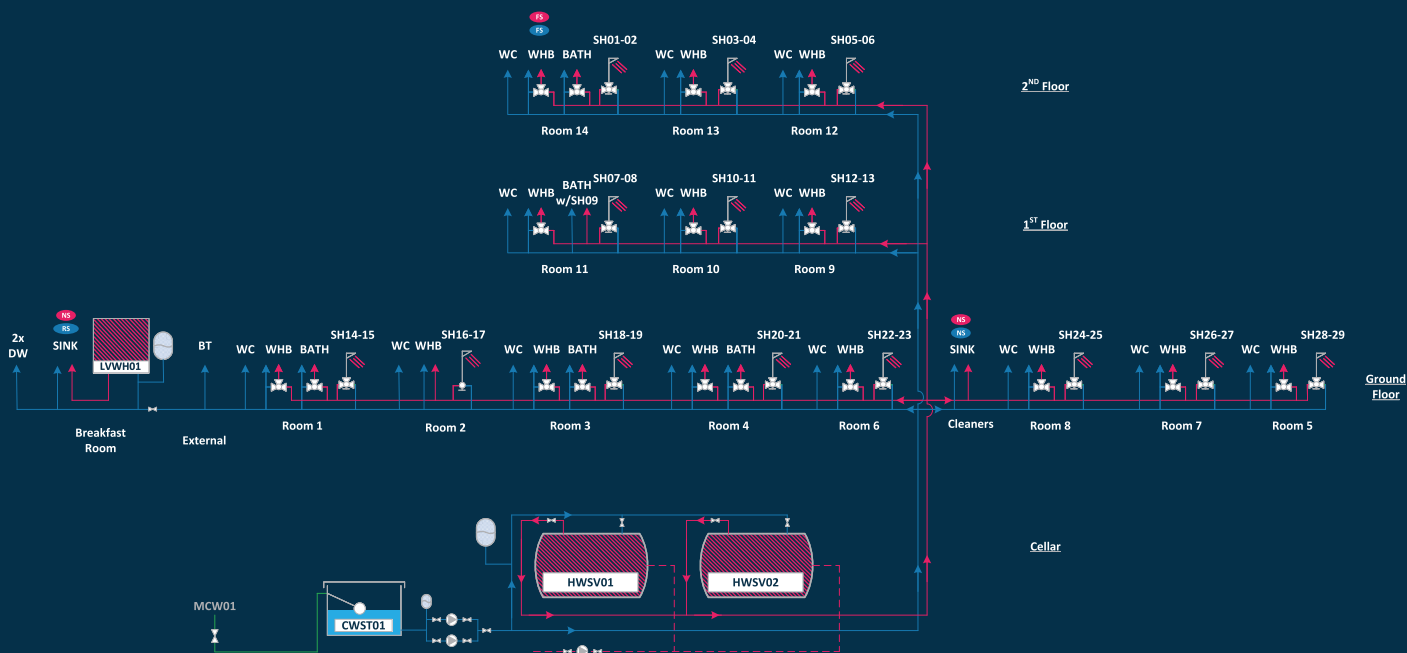
In addition to this, your risk assessor will check for any rust, sludge, biofilm, organic matter or scale (all of which feeds bacteria), and they'll also look for any dead legs or other glaring flaws in your system (including ones that might improve efficiency).



Create a detailed schematic

Following their visit, the risk assessor will produce a schematic of your water system, providing you with a visual representation of your system that you can use for years to come.





Deliver report & provide remedial suggestions

Finally, you'll be provided with a risk assessment report. This document is designed to deliver key actionables and recommended remedial work. *Competent risk assessors* will produce a document that is easily accessible by anyone, including photographs of the systems in question. This is important as if you can't understand it, then what's the point?

With your risk assessment report in hand, you know exactly what level of risk your building is in, and can act on any potential dangers.



What do legionella risk assessments cover

Simply put, a risk assessment should cover your full water system and leave no stone unturned

-  All cold water systems
-  Cold water storage
-  Hot water systems (including storage vessels)
-  Shower units
-  Air conditioning systems
-  Cooling towers
-  Evaporative condensers
-  Fountains
-  Supply pipework
-  Irrigation systems
-  Spa baths
-  Other systems including water coolant systems, vehicle washers, misting systems, spray humidifiers and more.

Essentially, any system that harbours standing water for any length of time should be checked. As mentioned, legionella bacteria prefer conditions between 20–45°C in areas where nutrients are plentiful. Potentially, your water systems ticks all the boxes!



Why are they important?

First and foremost, legionella risk assessments are designed to **protect the people living/working in your building(s)** from bacteria that cause dangerous diseases.

Legionnaires' disease is a severe form of pneumonia and can be life threatening. Employers, managers, landlords and duty holders have a legal responsibility to assess, control and reduce the risk of legionella exposure.

Legionella risk assessments also help you ensure ACOP L8 compliance, which is the Approved Code of Practice established by the Health and Safety Executive. Failure to remain compliant can lead to prosecution.

So, in order to 1) keep people safe and 2) avoid prosecution, it's prudent to carry out regular legionella risk assessments!



What can you do between risk assessments?

There are a handful of activities that you can undergo, even with the most basic knowledge of water hygiene. If you're not confident to carry any of the following processes out, we highly recommend bespoke *water hygiene training*, which will give you the knowledge you need to check the safety of your water systems in between risk assessments.

A competent person can:

Take water temperatures

By taking weekly water temperature readings, you can be sure that your operational temperatures are within an acceptable range. We recommend taking the temperature of your:



Taps

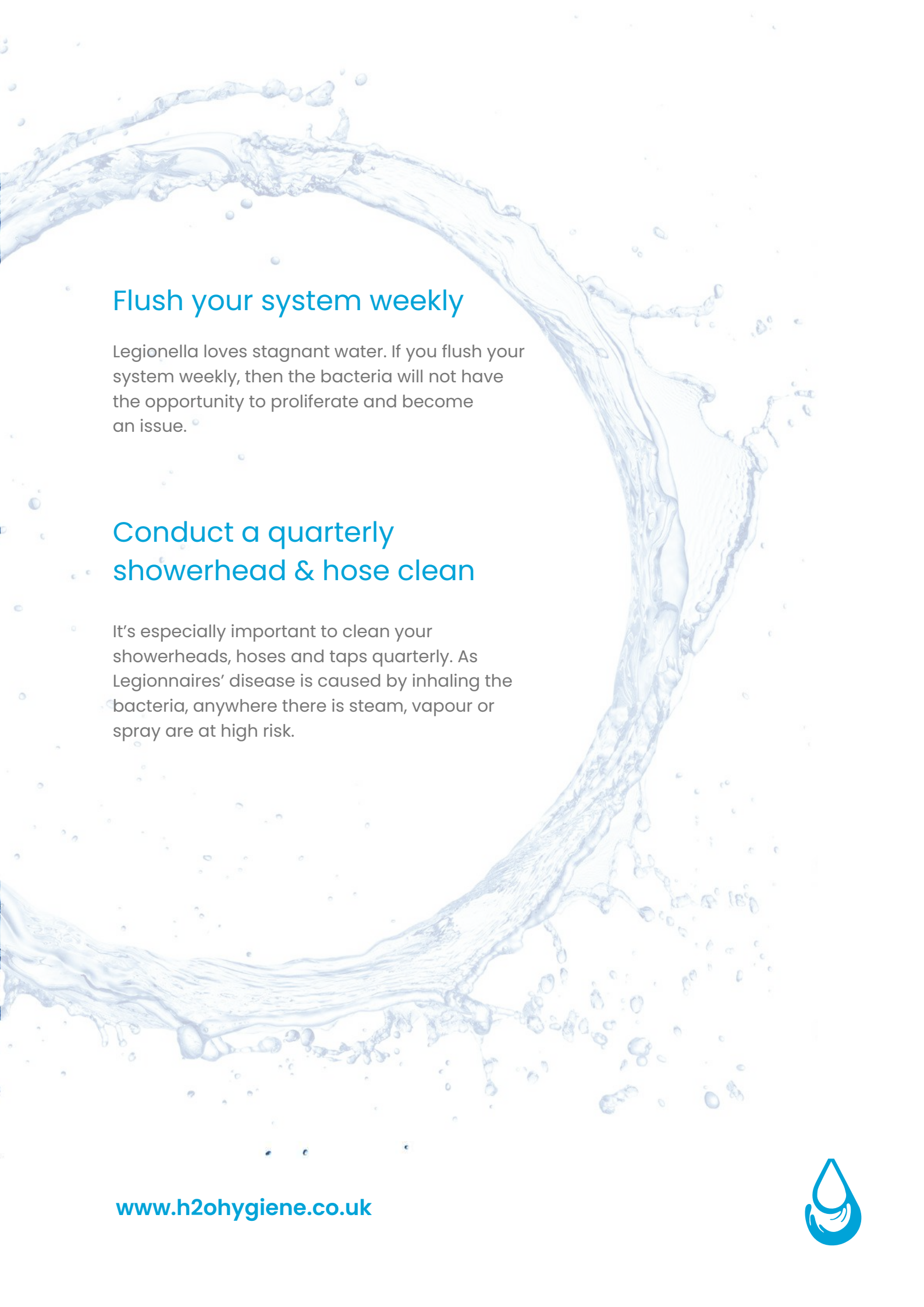


Showers



Hot water source





Flush your system weekly

Legionella loves stagnant water. If you flush your system weekly, then the bacteria will not have the opportunity to proliferate and become an issue.

Conduct a quarterly showerhead & hose clean

It's especially important to clean your showerheads, hoses and taps quarterly. As Legionnaires' disease is caused by inhaling the bacteria, anywhere there is steam, vapour or spray are at high risk.



Who can carry out a legionella risk assessment?

A legionella risk assessment needs to be carried out by a **competent person**.

The law doesn't explicitly state that you need to use a qualified risk assessor, only that you protect your building from the dangers of legionellosis. Your competent person can be anyone in your organisation who has the necessary skills and experience required to adequately carry out a risk assessment.

However, we **highly recommend** using a qualified/competent assessor for your legionella risk assessment. A qualified assessor can provide you guidance for your water system, deliver a comprehensive schematic and make tailored recommendations for any necessary remedial work.

Not sure what to do? Don't worry – talk to our specialists today. We're here to take the stress out of your legionella risk assessment, providing you the peace of mind that your building is under control of any potential waterborne dangers.

Get bespoke advice



Do I need a legionella risk assessment?

In short, yes – a legionella risk assessment is a legal requirement for any business. However, if you're a small business of less than 5 employees, it's unlikely that you need a full risk assessment; chances are your competent person can handle the assessment with a little support

Important rules and regulations



ACOP L8

ACOP L8 (Approved Code of Practice) is a long and complex guide on the steps you need to take to ensure compliance with the Health and Safety Executive.

You can learn all about ACOP L8

[ACOP L8 Information](#)



Health & Safety at Work act

The Health and Safety at Work act covers all occupational health and safety requirements in Great Britain.

Water hygiene is a substantial component of this. In order to remain compliant, you need to hold regular legionella risk assessments.



What can happen if you skip risk assessments?

It might be tempting to skip your next legionella risk assessment, after all, not much seems to have changed, right?

Unfortunately, water can pool, temperatures can change and pipework can wear. Things can change behind the scenes that could result in an outbreak.

Failure to address this with a legionella risk assessment can result in loss of life and significant fines. If you're seen to have not carried out regular risk assessments, the HSE can and will prosecute, so it's not worth the risk!



How often do you need a legionella risk assessment?

We recommend a legionella risk assessment **every 2 years for most businesses**, and **every 1 year for healthcare establishments**.

[Full FAQs available here](#)



What industries should regularly carry out legionella risk assessments?

Recommendations do vary per industry, however, the bottom line is that if your building has a water system, then it needs a risk assessment.

Healthcare

Legionella risk assessments are essential when it comes to protecting vulnerable people who are at significantly higher risk of death from Legionnaires' disease.

NHS trusts and care homes often have substantial water use, especially with high risk equipment such as showers, meaning that the risk of legionella proliferation is significantly high.

As such, we recommend yearly risk assessments to ensure your water systems are in the best possible condition.



Education

You have a duty of care to your students, no matter the ages that you work with.

Many education establishments find themselves at a significantly higher risk of legionella when compared to most other workplaces.

This is especially true when considering university campuses, who generally house students too. Legionella outbreaks often happen in university halls that have been neglected, so a comprehensive risk assessment is necessary to keep your students safe.

Hospitality

As a hospitality business, your reputation is everything. A single legionella outbreak can destroy everything you've built, so it's not worth the risk.

Get a professional in and get the peace of mind you deserve.

Industrial and other Offices

While perhaps less pressing, it's still important to ensure your business is protected from the dangers of legionella.

Get a regular assessment done every two years and rest easy knowing that you've got it sorted in the case that HSE come knocking.





Legionella risk assessments, hygiene and remedial works from H2O Hygiene

If you're not sure how to approach your *legionella risk assessments*, then the safest bet is to get in touch with our team of water hygiene experts at H2O Hygiene.

We're here to guarantee your compliance, keeping everyone in your building safe from the threat of legionella and other waterborne pathogens.

Get in touch today for a free no-obligation quote. We're here to make bespoke recommendations tailored to your building.

Get free quote

