

Independent Guide

What should I look for when selecting a suitable Legionella risk assessor?



Independent workplace compliance

How do I know if I need a Legionella risk assessment?

If you employ more than five people at any site, you are required by a number of health and safety regulations to carry out a risk assessment. For example, the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations requires you to carry out an assessment of the risk in your premises from exposure to Legionella bacteria from your water systems.

What areas should be risk assessed?

You are required to identify any significant risk presented by your workplace, working practices, products etc. Therefore, all of your water systems (which can include showers, cooling towers, humidifiers, storage tanks and fire fighting systems) need to be assessed to judge whether Legionella bacteria are:

- Liable to enter the system;
- Liable to grow in the system;
- Whether fine aerosols or water droplets are likely to be formed from the system;
- Who would be exposed to the droplets; and
- Whether these are people in a susceptible group prone to contracting Legionnaires' disease.

In addition, you need to judge whether the current control measures are suitable and sufficient to either eliminate or adequately control the risks identified.

What should a Legionella risk assessment include?

In order to identify the risks, your risk assessor will examine your maintenance documentation and water treatment records to ensure that the appropriate procedures are being followed and documented. The assessment should also incorporate:

- A detailed asset register of your water systems and the facilities they serve; and
- A comprehensive schematic, so that you can prove that all the systems which might present a risk in the premises have been identified and suitably assessed.

Who should conduct a risk assessment?

Ideally, the risk assessment should be carried out by someone with no vested interest in managing or servicing your water systems. Legionella risk assessments can be accredited by UKAS under ISO 17020. It is always advisable to use a UKAS accredited organisation as you can be confident in a high level accurate service being provided.

If you use your maintenance or water treatment contractor to conduct the risk assessment, you will be asking the people to whom you have given specific control tasks to report formally on their effectiveness. If some of the regular tasks which they carry out are done incorrectly, they may not even be aware of their mistakes.

It is also worth remembering that with risk assessments you get what you pay for. There are many companies offering very cheap risk assessments. However, the quality of the assessment and subsequent report is likely to reflect the cost. The price should reflect the expertise of the risk assessor and the time required to conduct the assessment and analyse the findings. Investing in a low cost risk assessment can mean you receive a substandard report, which is unlikely to convince the enforcement agencies that the risks in your building have been identified and suitably assessed. A cheap risk assessment will not necessarily protect you. It could leave you liable and mean that you have to have another assessment completed before your compliance can be guaranteed.

How often do I need to have a risk assessment carried out?

L8, "Legionnaires' disease: The control of Legionella bacteria in water systems", states that the assessment should be reviewed whenever there is reason to suspect that it is no longer valid. An indication of when to review the assessment and what needs to be reviewed should be recorded. This may result from, for example:

- Changes to the water system or its use;
- Changes to key personnel;
- Changes to the use of the building in which the water system is installed;
- The availability of new information about risks or control measures;
- The results of checks indicating that control measures are no longer effective;
- A case of Legionnaires' disease/legionellosis is associated with the system.



ISO 9001:FS 24510
ISO 14001:EMS 84550
BS OHSAS 18001: OHS 590676

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If you are a tenant in a managed building, your landlord has responsibility to ensure that a Legionella risk assessment is carried out on the common parts. However, you and your landlord do have overlapping duties of care to your staff. You should ask your landlord for written reassurance that a suitable risk assessment has been carried out. If possible, request a copy of the risk assessment report. If you have installed any water services into your areas then you are responsible for assessing their risk.

How will I benefit if a risk assessment is carried out?

A thorough risk assessment will give you an action plan to help you eliminate or minimise the risks identified. The additional measures or controls required will protect you, your staff, the public and your business.

What are the implications if I do not have a risk assessment?

Under the COSHH Regulations you are legally obliged to conduct a Legionella risk assessment. Failure to do so may lead to prosecution, especially if an incident has occurred which could have reasonably been anticipated if a formal risk assessment had been carried out.

This guide is of a general nature; specific advice can be obtained from Assurity Consulting. Assurity Consulting is the UK's leading independent compliance consultancy specialising in workplace health, safety and environmental solutions. We have over 30 years' experience of helping customers of all sizes, from across all sectors, manage their compliance responsibilities, making sure that their organisation is compliant, their employees are safe, their processes are cost effective and their management team is in control.



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