

LEGIONNAIRE'S DISEASE IS 100 PERCENT PREVENTABLE

Protect your community and your business with a water management plan.

Water supply contamination is causing increased outbreaks of Legionnaire's disease – a potentially life-threatening form of pneumonia. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that between 8,000 and 18,000 people are hospitalized with the disease in the United States each year.

Legionella bacteria is found naturally in the environment, usually in warm water, making hot tubs, large plumbing systems, decorative fountains, hot water tanks and cooling towers common areas for risk. In addition, misting systems often found at grocery stores and parks, ice machines and humidifiers can become breeding grounds for the bacteria if not properly maintained.

In 2015, a combination of large outbreaks, standardization and regulation have thrust Legionella into the spotlight and put the water management practices of building owners and managers under a microscope.

The Perfect Storm

On June 26, 2015, the American National Standards Institute approved details and guidance developed by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) to prevent and mitigate the emergence of Legionella in building water systems.

Called Standard 188-2015, the ASHRAE guidelines are not mandatory. But, they do hold the agencies responsible for assuring the safety of a building liable for any presence of Legionella bacteria – including OSHA for commercial buildings and The Joint Commission for healthcare facilities.

Within a few short weeks following the approval of Standard 188-2015, two large outbreaks of Legionnaire's disease occurred, which had consequences beyond illness and death.

In July 2015, a cooling tower at the Opera House Hotel in New York City was the source of an outbreak that left 12 dead and 130 reported individuals with the disease. New York responded with a new city-wide regulation that all cooling towers in the city be evaluated and disinfected if necessary.

In August 2015, an Illinois state veterans home in Quincy experienced a Legionnaire's outbreak, leaving nine dead and 53 reported individuals with the disease. The age and size of the complex has made it challenging to determine the source of the disease and to prevent its spread. Local news sources are now calling into question the quality of the facility's overall care practices.

While Legionella is a naturally-occurring bacteria, Legionnaire's disease is 100 percent preventable, and the ASHRAE Standard 188 is a game-changer because it encourages building owners to be proactive. With an effective water management plan in place, the bacteria can be identified, reported, controlled and crises averted.

Take action now

Standard 188 requires a Water Management Plan (WMP) for all buildings with a cooling tower and/or multiple other water systems where water mists may harbor Legionella. The WMP serves as a risk management plan that includes hazard analysis, risk mitigation and plan validation through testing and monitoring. If an outbreak occurs and you are not compliant with the standard, you can face more lawsuits, litigation, regulation, and loss of customers than you would if you were compliant, not to mention the detriment caused by Legionnaire's disease.

Watertech can help you manage your risk for Legionella by providing tools you can use to develop, implement and validate a water management plan that is fully compliant with Standard 188.

Call our team of experts who can help you at every stage of mitigation and prevention:

- Development of WMP
- Membership on your WMP team
- Systems monitoring
- Corrective actions
- Legionella testing

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