



# Guidelines for Hut Managers

No. 12 February 2015\*



## *Legionella*

### **Scope and context**

This guideline summarises the legal obligations of hut managers in relation to assessing the risk of potentially pathogenic *Legionella* bacteria occurring in the water system of mountaineering huts and thereby possibly causing Legionnaires' disease. It also indicates where to find detailed information as to how to carry out a risk assessment.

### **What is *Legionella* and Legionnaires' disease?**

Bacteria belonging to the genus *Legionella* are common in natural waters – lakes, rivers and streams – and in man-made water systems, e.g. hot and cold water systems employing storage tanks, pipework, taps and showers. *Legionella* bacteria are usually associated with larger water systems, such as in factories, hotels, hospitals and cooling towers, but they can also live in smaller water supply systems in homes and other residential accommodation. Other potential sources of *Legionella* include spa and whirlpool baths, humidifiers (in factories) and fire-fighting systems (sprinklers and hose reels). *Legionella* species can survive at low temperatures, but grow at temperatures between 20°C and 45°C. Higher temperatures of 60°C and above will kill these bacteria.

Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia caused by *Legionella* species, primarily *L. pneumophila* – see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legionella> It can affect anybody, but some people are at higher risk, including those over 45, smokers and heavy drinkers, those suffering from chronic respiratory or kidney disease, and people whose immune system is impaired.

Legionellosis is the collective name given to the pneumonia-like illnesses caused by *Legionella*, including the most serious and well-known Legionnaires' disease, and also the similar but less serious conditions of Pontiac fever and Lochgoilhead fever.

### **How does the law apply to mountaineering clubs operating huts?**

Mountaineering and climbing clubs do not normally have any employees and are therefore not obliged to comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. It is, however, important that clubs recognise that they have a legal *duty of care* towards members, guests and any other persons while they are in the club's hut, e.g. a plumber engaged to work on the water system. Under common law you have a duty to consider the risks from *Legionella* that may affect your members or guests and take suitable precautions to control the risks.

### **Information available from the Health and Safety Executive**

The most relevant information as regards assessing the risk of *Legionella* in a hut water system is contained in a number of comprehensive publications issued by the Health and Safety Executive (see page 4), which provide all the information required.

*Legionnaires' disease - A brief guide for duty holders* outlines concisely the duties and responsibilities involved.

\*See notes in the information box on page 2 re. the currency (version no.) of this guideline

# Legionella

*Legionnaires' disease - The control of Legionella bacteria in water systems* is the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) and guidance. It is aimed at dutyholders, including employers, those in control of premises and those with health and safety responsibilities for others, to help them comply with their legal duties in relation to legionella. These include identifying and assessing sources of risk, preparing a scheme to prevent or control risk, implementing, managing and monitoring precautions, keeping records of precautions and appointing a manager to be responsible for others.

Associated publications are listed below.

## Where to obtain the HSE publications

Go to [www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/index.htm) and the following, downloadable free in .pdf , can be found under *Resources* –

- *Legionnaires' disease - A brief guide for duty holders*
- *Legionnaires' disease - The control of Legionella bacteria in water systems - Approved Code of Practice (AOCP) and guidance*
- *The control of Legionella bacteria in water systems - Audit checklists*
- *Legionnaires' disease - Technical guidance*

## Private water supplies

Where the water supply to a hut is not from a public main but is obtained from a local supply, e.g. a spring or stream, then the likelihood of *Legionella* bacteria being present is higher and the water should receive appropriate treatment – see hut guidelines nos.10.1 (England & Wales) and 10.2 (Scotland) Private Water Supplies.

**Note:** If viewing this .pdf while online then clicking on any [URL](#) will take you to that website.

### Hut Guidelines

These guidelines have been produced by the Huts Group of the British Mountaineering Council and the Huts Advisory Group of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland to assist those operating mountain huts in Britain.

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**URLs:** If any of the URLs (web addresses) given on the preceding pages are found to be 'dead links' please notify [huts@mcofs.org.uk](mailto:huts@mcofs.org.uk)

**Disclaimer:** These guidelines were revised on the date shown below and the information herein is believed to be accurate at the time of writing. No responsibility can be accepted for any loss of benefit or entitlement arising through use of these guidelines – they are not intended to be definitive.

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These guidelines are updated periodically; to check on the currency of this version go to one of the websites above where the latest version will always be displayed.