

To Vice-President/Deans, Heads of Schools, HoFAs

From Dr Melanie Taylor, University Safety Advisor

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cc Prof M Case, Dr S A Robson, Dr D Barker, Dr P Seechurn, T Humphreys,
School Safety Advisors & Biological Safety Advisors, Safety Representatives

Reference Safety Circular 9/2007

Legionella – implications for academic teaching and research

Managers will be aware of recent publicity associated with the prosecution and public inquiry into the outbreak of Legionnaire's disease at Barrow-in-Furness which resulted in 7 deaths.

The Estates Directorate have undertaken a review of their policy and procedures for controlling Legionella in water-based cooling equipment (cooling towers and evaporative condensers) and in hot and cold water distribution services. These account for the vast majority of equipment which may give rise to concerns about Legionella. However, there are a few examples of equipment operated within schools as part of their teaching / research work, where risks can arise and must be addressed within the school risk management framework. Known examples include:

- a model experimental cooling tower used in a heat and mass transfer experiment for 2nd year undergraduate students;
- flume tanks used to study erosion / hydrodynamics;
- spray chamber for studying corrosion by salt water;
- drench showers used in certain laboratories where there is a high risk of chemical contamination (eg with hydrogen fluoride, other corrosives).

Please note that this list is NOT definitive.

In any cases where equipment owned and operated by schools uses open water systems that can generate aerosols at temperatures favouring growth of Legionella bacteria (20-45°C), schools **must** complete their own COSHH and risk assessments to address this biological risk, and ensure that appropriate controls are in place and effective. Appropriate records should also be kept. In cases of doubt, the boundary of responsibility between Estates and School must be defined and recorded.

Deans of Faculty will wish to ensure that delegation of responsibility within their Faculty is clear, and that schools are maintaining their control measures.

For your information, the Estates policy is on their webpages, in Procedure Manual, Volume 4 (Health and Safety) EPM HS4. The HSE webpages are very helpful, at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/index.htm> and the HSE Approved Code of Practice on Legionella, L8, ISBN 0-7176-1772-6 is available on-line through the JRUL Database: Occupational Health and Safety Information Service (OHSIS) (Athens log in required). Technical advice on water systems is available from Estates Directorate (contact Dave Brown), and biological safety advice from Dr Patrick Seechurn, or your usual safety coordinator.

Dr Melanie Taylor
University Safety Advisor