OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

Polasaí agus Nósanna Imeachta/Policies and Procedures

Code	QA192
Title	Legionellosis including Legionnaires Disease
Policy Owner	Chief Operating Officer
Date	May 2026
Approved By	University Management Team (UMT)

1.0 Purpose

Legionellosis is the collective name given to the pneumonia like illness caused by Legionella bacteria including the most serious Legionnaire's disease. These bacteria are present in the natural environment and therefore likely to be present in the water systems under the University's control. The University of Galway acknowledges its responsibility in this regard and this policy sets out how the University and its managers will enable compliance with the requirements of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and the relevant Biological Agents Regulations to manage the risk of staff, students or others being exposed directly or indirectly to legionella organisms in university premises.

2.0 The Hazard

In low numbers, legionella are generally considered harmless. With the correct conditions, for example, warm, stagnant water, the presence of microorganisms and nutrients in the water or materials such as rust, the bacteria can grow and multiply to high levels, which increase the risk of exposure. High temperatures (minimum 60°C) kill the bacteria.

2.1 The principle sources of risk within the University are:

- Hot and cold-water services within buildings;
- Evaporative cooling systems;
- Safety showers;
- Eye wash stations;
- Fire-fighting and hose reel systems;
- Horticultural misting systems;
- Scientific, other equipment temporarily or permanently connected to the water system (App. 1)

2.2 Means of Spread and Persons at Risk

Legionnaires' disease is normally contracted by inhaling Legionella bacteria in tiny droplets of water (aerosols), deep into the lungs; there is no documented evidence of the disease passing from person to person. It can affect anyone, however, some people are at higher risk of infection, including:

- People over 45 years of age;
- Smokers and heavy drinkers;
- Individuals suffering from chronic respiratory disease;
- Individuals with an impaired immune system (immunosuppression).

3.0 Responsibilities

3.1. Buildings & Estates are responsible for the:

3.1.1. Identification, assessment and management of risk from Legionella in the University's major water tanks, supplies and systems (including toilet facilities, all bathroom taps and standard showers, etc.). The same procedures and management of risk apply in all outsourced facilities managed by University Buildings and Estates.

3.1.2. Identification of the legionella risk in the plumbed infrastructure water systems in the relevant Units and notifying the Head of Unit.

Buildings & Estates has developed a Policy and testing process on Legionella see link to the B&E's Prevention of Legionella Infection.

NOTE: Showerheads (including emergency showers) that are required to be dismantled, cleaned and disinfected to reduce the Legionella risks in accordance with best practice will be carried out by Buildings & Estates. Any Unit that needs this to be done, can request this through the normal Buildings & Estates Maintenance Request system.

3.2. Heads of Units are responsible for the:

3.2.1. Any unit equipment under the Unit's control that are **not** the responsibility of Buildings & Estates.Note: Heads of Unit should engage directly with Buildings & Estates if they are uncertain in relation to the specific equipment for which they are responsible.

3.2.2 Ensuring that their Unit manage and regularly flush all of their lab equipment that have water reservoirs/tanks. The typical flush duration is 2-5 minutes. Please see manufacturer's advice for further information.

3.2.3 Regularly flushing all taps, drench/emergency showers and eye washes in their labs and in the corridors outside of their labs etc, according to the Unit's local SOP

3.2.4 Ensuring that checks are undertaken, recorded and records kept for at least 5 years.

Heads of Unit need to appropriately manage these supplies/equipment by taking the following control measures:

- Regular (daily use) use of all taps and water outlets (as described in 3.2.2. and 3.2.3 above) to allow flushing of pipes and frequent cleaning of all items including drench/emergency showerheads/eye washes, to reduce the risks significantly.
- Maintain records of this flushing regime using the template (See Appendix 3)
- Routine flushing of emergency showers and emergency eye washes:-
  Plumbed in emergency showers should be flushed **weekly for 3 minutes** to verify proper operation and ensure that the stored water does not stagnate (Appendix 2 – Outline Methodology for Emergency Showers without Drains).
- Records must be held for at least 5 years. It is the responsibility of the relevant Head of Unit to ensure these checks are undertaken and recorded. For any Unit

specific equipment that has a legionella water risk (Appendix 1), a risk assessment is to be completed by the Unit and the necessary written records maintained.

- Heads of Units will be informed by Buildings & Estates of any legionella monitoring results outside of the norm.
- Heads of Units to ensure that their relevant staff attend the Legionella Awareness Training (central Health & Safety Office Training).
- Unit staff will report any issues identified needing the assistance of Buildings & Estates to rectify, using the standard Buildings & Estates Maintenance Request system.

In this way, both Buildings & Estates and the relevant Heads of Units will take the necessary measures to comply with the requirements of the *Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005* and the relevant *Biological Agents Regulations* to reduce the risk of Legionnaires' disease.

Name	**Responsibilities**
Director of Safety (Chief Operating Officer)	• Oversee the development, implementation and maintenance of the Safety Management System. • Chair the Safety Working Group and routinely make its minutes and report available to the UMT. • Report to UMT as required to UMT on safety management, outcomes. • Bring forward the annual safety report for adoption.
Health and Safety Officer	• Carryout periodic checks to confirm that the necessary testing and checks are being completed.
Director of Real Estate/ Buildings & Estates	• Identify and assess sources of risk. • Identify the legionella risk in the plumbed water systems of the relevant Units. • Establish processes to monitor (regular testing), and where the bacteria is identified to • Implement and manage the processes including the appointment of a member of Buildings & Estates staff to be managerially responsible. • Maintain records and monitor to verify that what has been done is effective. • Emergency procedures as per the Buildings & Estate's Legionella Policy. • Maintain and operate the B&RE Policy

Unit Heads (All Units, teaching, research, support)	• Identify, document and assess sources of risk in any relevant Unit specific equipment. • Maintain in line with manufacturer advice/best practice, the necessary controls in the Unit's specific systems e.g. machines with water coolant system, emergency showers, eye wash stations, etc. • Ensure they and their relevant staff attend Legionella Awareness Training in order to become competent in managing the risk. • Maintain written records and monitor to verify that what has been done within their Unit is effective.
Relevant Staff responsible for monitoring/flushing	• Responsible to attend the provided training • Complete flushing at required intervals • Report any defects or issues to their line manager.

4.0 Related documents

4.1 Buildings & Estates Legionella Policy Link

4.2 Health & safety Authority Guidance on Legionellosis

Appendix 1. Non-exhaustive Checklist - Other Unit Specific Potential Risk Equipment

System / Service	Task
Ultrasonic; Humidifiers/foggers and water misting systems.	If equipment is fitted with UV lights, check to ensure effectiveness of lamp (check to see if within working life of the lamp etc.) and clean filters
	Ensure automatic purge of residual water is functioning.
	Clean and disinfect all wetted parts
	Sampling for Legionella
Spray humidifiers, air washers and wet scrubbers.	Clean and disinfect spray humidifiers / air washers and make up tanks including all wetted surfaces, descaling as necessary.
	Confirm operation of non-chemical water treatment (if present)
Water softeners	Clean and disinfect resin and brine tank - check with manufacturer what chemicals can be used to disinfect resin bed.
Lathe and machine tool coolant systems	Clean and disinfect storage and distribution system.
Horticultural misting systems	Clean and disinfect distribution pipework, spray heads and make-up tanks including all wetted surfaces, descaling as necessary.
Rotavapors	Drain and Clean, Disinfect, Descale, Refill with Clean Water
Waterbaths and water chillers sonicators and humidified incubators	Clean and disinfect tanks
Indoor fountains, ponds and water features	Clean and disinfect ponds, spray heads and make-up tanks including all wetted surfaces, descaling as necessary.

Appendix 2. Outline Flushing Procedure for Emergency Showers without access to a drain.

- Emergency showers must be flushed weekly and run for 2-5 minutes.
- Where showers are located in labs adjacent to sinks they can be discharged into the sink by means of an emergency shower flushing “sock”.
- When it is not possible to discharge the emergency shower directly into a lab sink then it needs to discharge into a suitable receptacle. This receptacle then needs to be safely emptied.
- This link give a good demonstration of how a shower without a nearby drain can be safely flushed.
- Alternative options are the use of a wheel bin with a low level tap to discharge the water.
- The Unit needs to risk assess the activity in view of the manual handling, height, slip and other hazards involved.

Appendix 3. Unit Record of Weekly Flushing Template