



C E R T A D E X

Water Hygiene & Legionella Compliance

The Facilities Manager's
Plain English Guide

Understand your duties, know what to put in place, run it with confidence — and protect yourself.

For UK premises · England, Wales, Scotland & Northern Ireland

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How to use this guide

Water hygiene is one of the few areas of building management where getting it wrong can make people seriously ill and land an organisation in court. It is also one of the most misunderstood — wrapped in codes, acronyms and conflicting advice. This guide cuts through that. It explains what the law actually expects, what you need to have in place, what good practice looks like week to week, and how to protect yourself and your organisation when questions are asked.

It is deliberately built to be picked up and put down. Read it cover to cover when you take on a new building or want to check your whole position; or jump straight to the section, table or checklist you need today. Nothing here assumes you already speak the language — but it does not stop at the basics either.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 30 MINUTES TODAY

Find your latest Legionella risk assessment and check whether its recommendations have actually been actioned; confirm who is named, in writing, as responsible person and deputy; and look at your most recent monitoring records for any unexplained gaps. Those three checks tell you most of what you need to know about where you stand.

Who this guide is for

Three readers, one document. Each section is written so all three find what they need — and the coloured boxes (explained below) flag content aimed squarely at each.

If you are...	Start here	What you most need
New to the FM role	Parts One to Three, in order	A clear picture of the duty, the four control ideas, and the routine that keeps you compliant.
An experienced FM checking your position	Section 3, Section 4 and the Part Five tools	The detail and frequencies to test your current regime against, plus the self-audit checklist.
A director or business owner	Section 1, Section 7 and the Director's view boxes	Where the legal accountability sits, what exposure looks like, and how documented control defends you.

The colour-coded boxes

Throughout the guide you will see four kinds of highlighted box. They let you skim for what matters to you:

KEY POINT

The single most important thing to take from a section — if you read nothing else, read these.

WATCH OUT

A common mistake or a place duty holders routinely get caught out. These are where exposure tends to hide.

DIRECTOR'S VIEW

The governance and liability angle — written for the person who carries the accountability rather than does the tasks.

GOING DEEPER

Extra technical detail for the experienced FM who wants to understand the why, not just the what.

The four ideas behind everything

Almost every rule, frequency and control in this guide comes back to four simple ideas. If you understand these, the rest follows:

1. **Keep hot water hot.** Above the range bacteria like.
2. **Keep cold water cold.** Below the range bacteria like.
3. **Keep water moving.** Stagnation is the enemy.
4. **Keep systems clean.** No scale, sludge, rust or biofilm for bacteria to feed and hide in.

IMPORTANT — PLEASE READ

This is general guidance, not legal advice, and not a substitute for a site-specific Legionella risk assessment carried out by a competent person. Duties, frequencies and standards vary by building, water system and use. Where this guide gives a frequency, temperature or threshold, treat it as typical good practice — your own risk assessment and written scheme set the requirement for your site.

Always verify precise legal or technical points against primary sources — the HSE, the relevant Approved Code of Practice and guidance, WRAS, and your water undertaker (Scottish Water in Scotland) — before relying on them. Appendix B lists where to look.

This guide covers UK-wide principles, but healthcare guidance, water undertaker requirements and regulator expectations vary across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Always confirm the applicable national guidance before relying on a specific requirement.

WHAT THIS GUIDE DOES NOT DO

This guide does not certify a site as compliant, replace a Legionella risk assessment, replace a written scheme of control, or provide legal advice. It is designed to help duty holders, responsible persons and facilities managers understand the requirements, organise their records and ask better questions of competent specialists.

Contents

How to use this guide.....	2
Where do I start?.....	6
Section 1 — Why this matters.....	8
Section 2 — The regulations explained simply.....	12
Section 3 — What you actually need to have in place.....	17
Section 4 — What compliance looks like day to day.....	24
Section 5 — The paperwork you actually need.....	30
Section 6 — When to get a specialist in.....	33
Section 7 — What happens if you get it wrong.....	35
Section 8 — Your self-audit checklist.....	38
Quick reference — typical monitoring schedule.....	41
Frequently asked questions.....	42
Appendix A — Glossary of terms.....	44
Appendix B — Useful sources and where to verify.....	47

Where do I start?

If you are picking this up cold, work down these questions in order. The first one you answer “no” or “not sure” to is where to begin — deal with it before moving on.

STEP 1

Do you have a current, site-specific Legionella risk assessment?

If no → This is your first priority. Commission one from a competent assessor (Section 6). Everything else depends on it.

If yes → Go to step 2.

STEP 2

Is a responsible person appointed in writing, with a named deputy?

If no → Appoint a competent, senior-enough person in writing, and name a deputy (Section 3).

If yes → Go to step 3.

STEP 3

Do you have a live written scheme of control and an up-to-date logbook with no gaps?

If no → Put the written scheme in place and start or restore monitoring against it (Sections 3 and 4).

If yes → Go to step 4.

STEP 4

Are out-of-range results investigated, corrected, re-checked and recorded?

If no → Fix the close-the-loop process so every failing reading is followed through and logged (Section 4).

If yes → Go to step 5.

STEP 5

Is any cooling tower, spa pool or other higher-risk system identified and on a specialist regime?

If no → Get it confirmed and onto a proper specialist regime, and register any notifiable plant (Sections 4 and 6).

If yes → You have the backbone in place. Keep it running and review it regularly.

Section 1 — Why this matters

AT A GLANCE

- Legionella is a waterborne bacterium that causes Legionnaires' disease, a severe and sometimes fatal pneumonia.
- Controlling it is a legal duty under health and safety law — enforceable whether or not anyone falls ill.
- Accountability sits with the duty holder, who appoints a competent responsible person; the duty cannot be delegated away.
- Consequences range from improvement notices to prosecution, unlimited fines, custodial sentences and civil claims.

What Legionella is, and how it makes people ill

Legionella is a group of bacteria found naturally in rivers, lakes and groundwater, usually in numbers too low to be a problem. The difficulty is that the conditions inside ordinary building water systems — warmth, stillness, and a supply of scale, rust, sludge and biofilm to feed on — let it multiply to dangerous levels. Of the many species, *Legionella pneumophila* causes most human illness.

People become ill by breathing in fine water droplets — an **aerosol** — that carry the bacteria deep into the lungs. Showers, taps, spray taps, cooling towers, spa pools and fountains all create exactly this kind of aerosol. Infection is almost always by inhaling contaminated aerosol, and that is what the controls in this guide are built around. Aspiration of contaminated water or ice is also a recognised route, particularly for patients with impaired swallowing — one reason healthcare guidance goes further than L8. It is not normally spread from person to person: UKHSA describes person-to-person spread as generally not considered to occur, rather than ruling it out entirely.

Infection takes two forms. **Legionnaires' disease** is a serious pneumonia that can require intensive care and can be fatal, particularly in vulnerable people. **Pontiac fever** is a milder, flu-like illness that usually clears on its own. Both come from the same source, so both point to the same failure of control.

Who is most at risk

Anyone can be infected, but the risk of serious illness is far higher for some groups. A risk assessment must take account of who is actually exposed in your building:

- People aged over 45.
- Smokers and heavy drinkers.
- People with chronic lung, heart, kidney or liver conditions, or diabetes.
- People with weakened immune systems — including those on certain medications or undergoing treatment.

That's the sample.

You've seen how the guide is built and where it goes. The full edition runs to 47 pages and carries on through the regulations, what you need to have in place, what compliance looks like day to day, the records that demonstrate what has been done, and what happens when it goes wrong.

WHAT'S IN THE FULL GUIDE

- Section 1 — Why this matters, in full
- Section 2 — The regulations explained simply (L8, HSG274, Water Fittings Regs)
- Section 3 — What you actually need in place, and who is responsible
- Section 4 — What compliance looks like day to day, with monitoring frequencies
- Section 5 — The records you need, and the gaps that raise questions
- Section 6 — When to get a specialist in, and how to choose one
- Section 7 — What happens if you get it wrong
- Section 8 — Your self-audit checklist, scored R/A/G
- Quick-reference monitoring schedule, FAQs, glossary and source list

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