

Questions to ask your building manager

Legionella prevention happens inside building water systems. These questions establish whether anyone is managing yours.



These questions apply to any building with a water system — where you live, work, stay or visit. Illustrative image.

In most of the United States, buildings are not required to test their water for *Legionella*, not required to report results, and not required to tell you what they found. Asking is often the only route to knowing. These are reasonable questions, and a building doing this properly will have ready answers.

1 Does this building have a written water management programme?

The accepted control measure. CDC found 43% of buildings behind the outbreaks it investigated had none at all.

2 Who is personally responsible for it?

A name, not a department. Programmes most often fail because responsibility sat with a job title and the person left.

3 When were the water systems last tested?

A date. "Regularly" is not an answer.

4 What were the results?

Testing that nobody reviews achieves nothing.

5 Are there cooling towers on this building?

If so, ask when they were last cleaned and disinfected, and on what schedule.

6 Are there hot tubs, spa pools or decorative fountains?

These are among the most common sources in identified outbreaks.

7 How are water temperatures monitored, and where?

Readings should be taken at the points furthest from the heater, not just at the tank.

8 What happens to fixtures in areas that go unused?

Stagnant water is what *Legionella* needs. Flushing protocols should exist.

9 Was anything done differently after the building was closed or under-occupied?

Reopening after a quiet period is a recognised risk moment.

10 Has anyone connected to this building been diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease?

If yes, ask whether the local health department was notified.

If the answers are unsatisfactory

Your local health department can advise, and in some jurisdictions can inspect. You are entitled to ask; nobody is entitled to a good answer, which is a gap this foundation works to close.

Why you have to ask at all

New Jersey requires covered buildings to post a notice on the premises confirming a water management programme is in place — the only law in the country that gives an occupant something they can see. Everywhere else, the answer is only ever available on request.

This sheet provides general public health information and is not medical advice. If you believe you have been exposed to *Legionella* or are experiencing symptoms, contact a doctor or your local health department.