Tips to Prevent Legionella Growth in Water Systems

Did you know that a reduction in water usage can be a contributing factor to Legionella growth?

Legionella is the bacteria that causes the respiratory diseases Legionnaire’s disease and Pontiac fever. As hotels and motels scale down occupancy during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to continue maintaining the building water systems to prevent the growth of Legionella.

Legionella can grow within many parts of a building’s plumbing system. It is most commonly associated with:

- Cooling towers
- Showers
- Hot water heaters and plumbing fixtures
- Whirlpools or hot tubs
- Decorative water fountains

What can you do now to prevent Legionella growth?

- Review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance for building water systems.
- Develop a water management program for your facility using the CDC Legionella toolkit.
- Flush hot and cold water fixtures in unoccupied rooms and low-use areas on a weekly or biweekly basis.
- Avoid turning down or setting back the temperature setting of water heaters.
- Maintain normal whirlpool maintenance and disinfectant levels even if a whirlpool is closed to the public, or drain the whirlpool according to this guidance.

Additional resources about Legionella, Legionnaire’s disease, Pontiac fever, and how to develop a water management program can be found on the Wisconsin Department of Health Services website and the CDC website.

Any questions for DATCP can be sent to datcpdfrsrec@wisconsin.gov.