Water Management Void Policy

## 1.1 Introduction

Medway Council recognise that the risk may increase where the property is unoccupied for a short period. It is important that dwellings that are vacant for extended periods should be managed appropriately. To manage the risks during non-occupancy, this procedure had been established for the Medway Council staff applying the control measures.

## 1.2 Scope

The scope of this procedure applies to:

* All Medway Council staff applying control measures to void properties.
* All Medway Council appointed management.
* Appointed water treatment contractor.
* Appointed risk assessing contractor.

## 1.3 Training

All personnel involved with the management, control and prevention of Legionella will be provided with regular training so that they are properly updated on changes in legislation and best practice in the management and control of Legionella in water services.

They will be properly trained to a level that ensures tasks are carried out in a safe, competent manner; and receive regular refresher training on a 3 yearly basis. All records of all initial and refresher training will be kept in the legionella training folder.

All relevant staff will receive training in relation to this procedure, where it is identified as part of the specific development needs for their role and responsibilities.

## 1.4 Void Property Legionella Risk Assessments

The responsible person will appoint a competent contractor to undertake a suitable and sufficient legionella risk assessment. The contractor will be informed by Medway Council in the contract specification that the risk assessment is to be carried out in accordance with the ACoP L8, HSG274 Part 2 and BS8580.

When a property converts to void the appointed team will inform the deputy responsible person via email. The deputy responsible person will then communicate with the responsible person for confirmation to instruct a competent assessor to carry out a legionella risk assessment on the void property. If the site has an initial legionella risk assessment the void risk assessment will be introduced into the initial assessment.

Once the risk is identified and assessed, a remedial programme will be prepared by the deputy responsible person, communicated to the responsible person for authorisation, implemented, and properly manage. Remedials will be completed by a competent contractor prior to the property being occupied. When remedial works are completed, the deputy responsible person will appoint a competent person to review the works.

## 1.5 Void Property for Short Periods

When a property converts to void the appointed team will inform the responsible person via email. The responsible person will then implement a control programme as identified in the list below. The required tasks will in this section will either be appointed to a competent contractor or Medway Council staff. The tasks in this section only applies to the Medway Council staff.

Prior to the occupant moving in the property a local clean and disinfection will be actioned. The deputy responsible person will appointed a competent contractor to undertake the task. The contractor will be instructed via the job specification to fill up the system, calculate the system capacity and chlorinate/disinfect in accordance with relevant guidelines with strict consideration to BS 8558, PD 855468 and HSG274 Part 2.

## Infrequently Used Outlets Flushing Process

Systems or individual outlets that are not frequently used allow the development of stagnant water conditions, which increase the potential risk of bacterial proliferation. The thermometer used for the tasks in this procedure must be calibrated to manufacturers guidelines.

Systematic process for flushing outlets:

1. Ensure that the voids can be flushed in an organised manner into an appropriate drain.
2. Ensure that the flushing of water from outlets does not create an unnecessary amount of aerosol at least no more than would be created when outlet is operated normally.
3. Flush the outlets until the temperature at the outlet stabilises and is comparable to supply water and purge to drain for 4 minutes.
4. Where showers need to be flushed, it is important to ensure that, where practicable, the shower-head is removed in order to reduce the potential of aerosol production.
5. Where the head is fixed, exposure to the aerosol produced must be minimised. One method that can be employed in this situation is the use of a transparent plastic bag, fixed around the shower- head, with one corner pierced to allow partial discharge of water.
6. Record the flush on the relevant report.

Frequency:

All void property outlets will be flushed weekly (i.e. not used for a period equal to or greater than seven days).

## Shower Head, Hose and Outlet Cleaning Process

Shower heads and hoses which remain semi wetted after use can accumulate lime scale and harbour biofilms and bacterial growth. Chemical safety is achieved by undertaking all activities involving chemicals in such a way as to ensure the safety of human health and the environment. Chemical safety COSSH risk assessment is to be carried out in accordance with the regulations.

Systematic process for cleaning and descaling shower heads and hoses:

1. Apply appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) before starting this task.
2. Following manufactures instructions safely pour the shower cleaning solution in a clean bucket.
3. Remove the shower head and hose and place in the bucket with the solution ensuring that the head and hose is fully submerged in the solution.
4. Using a brush or suitable applicator, all over the shower head.
5. Allow the head and hose to soak for 15 minutes then rinse thoroughly using clean water.
6. Inspect shower head and hose surface for any remaining scale, if any scale is present repeat step (d).
7. When the shower head and hose is scale free and clean reattached the head and hose with new washers.
8. Rinse thoroughly using clean water.
9. Record the clean on the relevant report.

Or

1. Remove shower head and hose when property becomes void.
2. Replace with new shower head and hose prior to the new occupant moving in.

Frequency:

All void property shower heads and hoses will be cleaned when the property has become a void, every month when the property is void and one week prior to the property being occupied.

1. Apply appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) before starting this task.
2. Following manufactures instructions safely pour the shower cleaning solution in a clean bucket.
3. Remove the outlet aerator (if present) and place in the bucket with the solution ensuring that the aerator is fully submerged in the solution.
4. If there is no aerator, soak a sponge in the chemical solution and soak the outlet where scale is present.
5. Using a brush or suitable applicator, all over the shower head.
6. Allow the area to soak for 15 minutes then rinse thoroughly using clean water.
7. Inspect outlet surface for any remaining scale, if any scale is present repeat step (d).
8. Record the clean on the relevant report.

Frequency:

All void property outlets will be cleaned when the property has become a void and one week prior to the property being occupied.

## Thermostatic Mixing Valve Maintenance Process

A thermostatic modulating valve (TMV) is a specially designed plumbing valve that carefully mixes hot and cold water to control hot water outlet temperatures to safe levels.

1. This task is to be carried out by a competent contractor.

Frequency:

As soon as the property has become a void and one week before the property is occupied if the property has been void for 12 months. TMVs are to be serviced annually if the void is for an extensive period.

## Cold water Storage Tank Inspection Process

The build-up of dirt within a system can lead to bacterial growth. It is therefore imperative that hot and cold water tanks are inspected at least annually for signs of sludge and scale. Poor control over the water temperature and condition of the stored water plus the condition of the tank itself, may lead to colonising of the tank by Legionella Properties that have a cold water storage tank require inspection to identify areas of risk leading to the proliferation of legionella bacteria.

1. The lid should be closely fitted and in good condition.
2. Insect and vermin screens should be fitted to protect any pipework open to the atmosphere, such as the overflow pipe and vent.
3. Where screens are fitted, they should be installed so they do not hold water.
4. To avoid stagnation, where multiple cold water storage tanks are fitted, they should be connected to ensure each tank fills uniformly and water is drawn off through each of the tanks.
5. Where practical expansion pipes from calorifiers, should not return into cold-water storage tanks. If pipes are returned, action is to be carried out to seal their entrance into the tank to prevent the ingress of dirt or other contamination.
6. Check pipework to ensure thermal gain is kept to a minimum by adequate lagging and separation of cold water services pipework and components from hot water services and heating systems.
7. Tank water temperatures should ideally be maintained at less than 20°C.
8. The volume of stored cold water should be minimised and should not normally exceed that required for one day’s water use.
9. Check the ambient temperature of the tank room.
10. Check the tank water temperature remote from the ball valve and the incoming mains temperature. Record the maximum temperatures of the stored and supply water recorded by fixed maximum/minimum thermometers where fitted.
11. There should be a regular water flow throughout the system and all outlets to avoid stagnation. In cold water storage tanks this can be facilitated by locating inlet and outlet pipes on opposing sides of the tank at different heights.
12. Tanks should be labelled clearly for easy identification.
13. All defects on the cold water storage tank will be escalated to the deputy responsible person.
14. The deputy responsible person will appoint a competent contractor to complete the remedial works. The contractor will be instructed to send photographic evidence of completed tasks.

Frequency:

As soon as the property has become a void and one week before the property is occupied if the property has been void for 12 months. Cold water storage tanks are to be inspected annually if the void is for an extensive period.

## Calorifier Temperature Monitoring Process

1. Calorifiers: Check calorifier flow temperatures (thermostat settings should modulate as close to 60°C as practicable without going below 60°C) Check calorifier return temperatures (not below 50 °C).

Frequency:

As soon as the property has become a void, every month when property is void and one week prior to the property being occupied.

## Calorifier Inspection Process

1. This task is to be carried out by a competent contractor.

Frequency:

As soon as the property has become a void and one week before the property is occupied if the property has been void for 12 months. Calorifiers are to be inspected annually if the void is for an extensive period.

## 1.6 Void Property for Extended Periods

Where properties will be void for longer than one week, the tasks in section 1.4 will be implemented or the dwelling will be drained and isolated at the incoming main to the dwelling. The appointed contractor will be informed by Medway Council via the specification to isolate the water main and leave no areas of stagnation. The isolation is to be as close to the main as practicable.

Prior to the occupant moving in the property a local clean and disinfection will be actioned. The deputy responsible person will appointed a competent contractor to undertake the task. The contractor will be instructed via the job specification to fill up the system, calculate the system capacity and chlorinate/disinfect in accordance with relevant guidelines with strict consideration to BS 8558, PD 855468 and HSG274 Part 2.

## 1.7 Communication to New Occupants

Medway Council will inform new tenants of the potential risk of exposure to legionella and its consequences and advise on any actions arising from the findings of the risk assessment, where appropriate. Tenants should be advised to inform the landlord if the hot water is not heating properly or if there are any other problems with the system, so that appropriate action can be taken.

## 1.8 Records

The Responsible Person and/or Deputies will ensure that appropriate records are kept. All records will be securely held, and any electronic information will be backed-up.

The results of flushing, cleans, monitoring, inspections, tests, checks, temperatures and works undertaken, are to be recorded onto the appropriate logbook. The appointed staff will send all logs to the appointed deputy responsible person. All records will be retained for at least five years.

Dates and signatures will be required on all records for flushing, cleaning, monitoring, inspections, tests, checks, and works undertaken.

## 1.9 Procedure Review

This procedure is to be reviewed each year to make sure it is effective and complies with current statutory requirements. A regular review will be conducted when:

* Changes to the water system or its use.
* Changes to the use of the building in which the water system is installed.
* The availability of new information about risks or control measures.
* The results of checks indicating that control measures are no longer effective.
* Changes to key personnel.
* A case of legionnaires’ disease/legionellosis associated with the system.
* Changes to current legislation and associated guidance documents.

Any changes are to be validated by Medway Councils nominated third party Legionella specialist consultant.

This version published - December 2020

Last review - Sept 2022

Next review due - Sept 2024