TOOLBOX TALK AWARENESS PACKAGES

HAZ-LEG · Legionella Awareness

Product Overview

Audience: Maintenance, facilities and plumbing workers, aged care, hospitality and leisure staff, and nursery, garden and landscaping workers · Duration: 20–30 minutes

Version 1.0 · 22 November 2026

For anyone who looks after cooling towers, warm water systems and spa pools, or handles potting mix and compost: what Legionnaires' disease is, where the bacteria grow, who is most at risk, and the controls that keep it out of the air people breathe.

Legionella bacteria live naturally in water and soil. They can grow to dangerous levels in cooling towers, warm water systems, spa pools, showers and taps that are not used often, and in potting mix and compost. People catch Legionnaires' disease, a serious lung infection, by breathing in fine water droplets or dust that carry the bacteria. Older people, smokers and people with weakened immune systems are most at risk.

This talk covers where Legionella grows, how people are exposed, the signs to report, and the controls: water systems designed, maintained, treated and tested by competent people under a risk management plan, flushing outlets that are not used often, never changing or switching off treatment, and handling potting mix and compost with care. It is awareness, not training to maintain, treat or test water systems.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Explain what Legionnaires' disease is and how people catch it: breathing in fine water droplets or dust that carry the bacteria
- Name where Legionella can grow at work: cooling towers, warm water systems, spa pools, little-used showers and taps, and potting mix and compost
- Know who is most at risk, and the flu-like signs to report to a doctor, saying where you work
- Follow the controls for water systems: the risk management plan, competent maintenance and testing, flushing little-used outlets, and never switching off treatment
- Handle potting mix and compost safely: open bags away from your face, damp it down, wear gloves and a suitable mask where advised, and wash your hands
- Report faults, missed maintenance, cloudy or smelly water and anything that could spray mist where people breathe

What it covers

Module	Covers
Why it matters	What Legionnaires' disease is; Where Legionella grows; Who is most at risk
Controls that work	Water systems to a plan; Flushing and maintenance; Potting mix and compost
Your part	Follow the plan and the records; Signs to report; Report it

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Activities

- Spot the risk: workers look at four jobs, from cleaning a cooling tower drift eliminator to opening bags of potting mix in a hot shed, and decide where the risk is and how to control it
- What would you do: workers decide what to do in four situations, from a spa pool with no treatment records to a workmate with a fever and cough after cleaning a water tank

What is in the package

Item	File
Editable PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes, plus PDF	02_TRAINING_PRESENTATION/Training Presentation.pptx and .pdf
Facilitator guide with a running sheet, discussion prompts and model answers	03_FACILITATOR_GUIDE/Facilitator Guide.docx and .pdf
Participant handout with the key points to take away	04_PARTICIPANT_HANDOUT/Participant Handout.docx and .pdf
Attendance record form, to capture who attended, when, and who facilitated	06_RECORDS/Attendance Record.docx and .pdf
Excel attendance register	06_RECORDS/Attendance Register.xlsx
Multiple-choice theory assessment, to record understanding if your business wants to	05_ASSESSMENT/Theory Assessment.docx and .pdf
Answer key for the assessment	05_ASSESSMENT/Assessment Answer Key.docx and .pdf
Certificate template	06_RECORDS/Certificate Template.docx
Start here: Read Me First, Product Overview, Permitted Use Terms, Version Information	01_START_HERE/ (four PDFs)

What you need to deliver it

- A facilitator such as a supervisor, leading hand or WHS adviser who has read the facilitator guide and knows your site's arrangements for the topic
- A screen or projector, or printed slides or handouts: it works in a crib room, site office or on a video call
- Your own site procedures for the topic, to point to during the session

Questions

Does it say what water temperature or treatment levels to use? No, on purpose. The right temperatures, treatment and testing depend on the system and are set by its risk management plan, the maker's instructions and the health authority where you are. The talk teaches workers to follow the plan and report problems, and asks you to add your own water system arrangements.

Can we add our own site procedures and photos? Yes. The slides, handout and guide are editable, and the facilitator guide marks the places to add your own procedures, contacts and photos of your workplace.

Do we have to use the assessment? No. It is there if your business wants a record that each worker understood the key points. The attendance record on its own shows who attended and when.

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TOOLBOX TALK

Legionella Awareness

Where Legionella grows, how people catch it, and the controls that stop it

20–30 minutes · Maintenance, facilities and plumbing workers, aged care, hospitality and leisure staff, and nursery, garden and landscaping workers

[Company name] · [Date] · [Facilitator name]

LEG

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What this talk is, and is not

This talk covers

- ✓ What Legionnaires' disease is
- ✓ Where Legionella grows
- ✓ Controls for water and potting mix
- ✓ Signs to report

This talk is not

- ✗ Water treatment or testing
- ✗ Cooling tower maintenance
- ✗ Plumbing work
- ✗ Our system: **[Our water system arrangements]**

Awareness only. Water systems are maintained and tested by competent people, and plumbing needs a licence.

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What it is, and where it grows

Legionella is caught by breathing in fine droplets or dust, not by drinking water.

- Cooling towers and their drift
- Warm water systems, tanks and pipes
- Spa pools, showers and taps not used often
- Potting mix and compost
- Most at risk: older people, smokers, weakened immunity

A composite example

- A shower in a little-used room of an aged care home has not been run for weeks.
- A resident is moved into the room. The maintenance plan said to flush it weekly, but nobody did.

Still, warm water and dust are where it grows.

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Duties under health and safety laws

The business must

- Identify water systems that can spread it
- Have them maintained, treated and tested
- Keep records and follow the plan
- Inform and train workers

You must

- Follow the plan and procedures
- Flush and record as instructed
- Never switch off or change treatment
- Report faults and symptoms

Most health and safety laws give these duties. Check the law where you work (in Australia, WHS or OHS laws).

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The order of controls for Legionella

1. **Elimination** Remove dead legs and unused outlets and systems
2. **Substitution** Systems and products that make less mist or dust
3. **Isolation** Keep mist and drift away from people and air intakes
4. **Engineering** Design, treatment and drift eliminators that work
5. **Administrative** Risk management plan, maintenance, testing, flushing, records
6. **PPE** Gloves, eye protection, suitable masks where advised

HIGHER ORDER

Higher order controls remove or control the hazard at the source, or put a barrier between people and the hazard.

LOWER ORDER

Lower order controls rely on people to do a thing or wear a thing, every time, tired, distracted or rushed.

Behaviours are not on the hierarchy, but behaviours and culture decide whether every control on it actually works.

The plan, the treatment and the records are the core.

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Legionella Awareness

Participant handout · keep this

Legionella grows in still, warm water and in potting mix. People catch it by breathing it in. Keep this page.

The order of controls

1. Remove unused outlets and dead legs
2. Methods that make less mist or dust
3. Keep mist away from people
4. Design, treatment, drift eliminators
5. Plan, maintenance, testing, flushing, records
6. Gloves, eye protection, masks, last

Water systems

- ■ Follow the plan; flush and record
- ■ Never switch off or change treatment

Potting mix

- ■ Open away from your face; damp it down
- ■ Gloves, mask as advised; wash hands

Before you start

- ☐ Do I know the water system's plan, and who maintains it?
- ☐ Have the little-used outlets been flushed and recorded?
- ☐ Could this job spray mist where people breathe?
- ☐ Am I opening potting mix away from my face, and damping it down?
- ☐ Do I have gloves, a suitable mask where advised, and somewhere to wash?

Signs to report

- ■ Fever, chills, cough, short of breath
- ■ See a doctor and say where you work

Who and how

- ■ **[Our water system arrangements]**
- ■ **[Who to report to here]**

Keep the water system to its plan. Keep the mist and the dust out of your face.

This is awareness training. It is not a licence, a ticket, a permit or a competency. It is not water treatment, testing, cooling tower maintenance or plumbing training.

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