

WATER TEMPERATURE AND CARE HOMES - PREVENTING LEGIONELLA AND SCALDING

Controlling Legionella means high hot water temperatures. This increases the risk of scalding, usually prevented by fitting Thermostatic Mixing Valves (TMVs)

HSE's technical guidance on the control of Legionella, HSG274, requires that hot water is stored at 60°C and reaches 50°C at outlets within one minute of running. This is increased to 55°C where the residents are more vulnerable, determined in the risk assessment. These higher temperatures will usually be achieved by making adjustments to the thermostat which controls the set point for stored water.

Higher temperatures increase the risk of scalding. Again, risk assessment will determine the level of risk, and will depend on the susceptibility of the water users. Where high hot water temperatures are dangerous to residents, Thermostatic Mixing Valves (TMVs) should be fitted to outlets to which they have access. This will usually



include baths and basins, but not usually hot taps in kitchens, sluice rooms and laundry areas. They are fitted under basins and baths or, in some designs, within the body of the tap itself. It is not acceptable to fit TMVs at a central point so that the water in the circulated pipework is below 50°C or 55°C. Where there is a risk that the user may adjust the valve a TMV3, which is tamper proof, rather than a TMV2 should be fitted. This will also apply to showers.

Thermostatic Mixing Valves (TMVs) bring their own set of maintenance challenges. In order to reduce the risks posed by Legionella, the strainers or filters should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected annually, or at a frequency defined by the risk assessment. Manufacturers' guidance should be taken into account. In addition, the TMV should be regularly checked and serviced to guard against valve failure. Servicing will often be carried out at the

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same time as descaling and disinfection, or more often depending on manufacturer's advice and local water supply: a failsafe check ensures that in the event of cold water failure the valve shuts off, internal components will be inspected, cleaned and replaced as necessary and the unit re-calibrated.

It is not enough to rely on servicing, and every hot water temperature from taps in basins and baths should be manually checked by care home staff. This is often carried out weekly. It is considered good practice to check the bath temperature at every use before the resident enters the bath.

Legionella control, requires that hot and cold water temperatures should be checked monthly from sentinel outlets. Over the course of the year, all outlets should be checked. This is to identify any outlets that, due to plumbing design or mechanical faults such as clogged pipes, do not reach temperature.

All temperature checks and servicing must be recorded, even when no faults are identified, and records retained for 5 years. Records should include the staff member or engineer who carried out the work, the date, faults identified and how they were rectified.



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