ATTENTION: Facility Owners, Managers, and Operators

ISSUE: Water Stagnation Risks Due to Prolonged Reduced Building Occupancy

Drinking water delivered by Metro Vancouver remains safe to use and continues to be treated, monitored and tested in accordance with provincial requirements.

In certain buildings however, COVID-19 response measures will result in reduced building occupancy and water flow changes for extended periods. These factors may lead to reduced water flow and stagnation within a Building Water System (‘BWS’). If not addressed, this may foster the proliferation of microbes potentially harmful to human health, such as Legionella pneumophila. It is critical that health services are not strained by preventable issues.

All building owners and managers should verify that operational mechanical equipment such as cooling towers, decorative water features, hot tubs and swimming pools continue to operate in a safe manner. Serious consideration should be given to shutting down, draining and cleaning mechanical equipment where possible. Follow manufacturer’s guidance for both shut-down and later start-up of the equipment.

For mechanical equipment that must be kept running, ensure appropriate disinfection, circulation, maintenance and water quality monitoring, particularly with systems that may be operating intermittently. Regularly check to ensure monitoring & dosing equipment is working properly. For the hot water system, maintain all parts above 50°C. Flush, at peak flow and aerators removed, plumbing fixtures such as showerheads and taps periodically to prevent water stagnation. Prevent access to pools. Turn-off swimming and spa /hot tub pool heaters, and reduce pool room enclosure temperatures. Continue regular cleaning of pools and backwashing of pool filters & address other maintenance needs that may arise (e.g. algae).

Before re-occupancy, reassess these and other mechanical and plumbing components such as hot and cold water storage tanks, humidifier trays, low-flow sections of piping (‘dead legs’) and ice machines. Building Owners and Managers should consult their building’s Water Management Plan, and engage Water Systems Professionals as needed.

For More Information:

- Vancouver Coastal Health Authority – Health Protection (contact info above)

CDC Toolkits & Related Links:

Industry Links:
4. IAPMO https://www.iapmo.org/media/