

Microbial Control

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Functional Sub group Corporate Administration - Asset Management
Personnel/Workforce - Occupational Health & Safety

Summary Requirement for operation, maintenance and cleaning of water cooling systems.

Author Branch Environmental Health

Branch contact 9816 0225

Applies to Area Health Services/Chief Executive Governed Statutory Health Corporation, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Affiliated Health Organisations - Non Declared

Distributed to Environmental Health Officers of Local Councils, NSW Ambulance Service, NSW Department of Health, Public Health Units

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Compliance with this policy directive is mandatory.

CIRCULAR

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Contact	Mr Tony Burns (02) 6933 9120 Or 0428 693 374

MICROBIAL CONTROL

This Circular replaces Circular 98/43

This Circular is to update all involved in Microbial Control issues. The Public Health Regulation 1991 was repealed and replaced by the Public Health (Microbial Control) Regulation 2000, which commenced on 31 August, 2000. The Regulation may be viewed or down loaded at www.health.nsw.gov.au/csd/lisb/acts/index.html

Compliance with the provisions of Public Health (Microbial Control) Regulation 2000, including the Australian Standards incorporated in the Regulation is mandatory. Health care facilities should be aware of the requirements of the Regulation, including the following provisions:

1. It is an additional operating requirement for a water cooling system that the system must be equipped with a process designed to control microbial growth and that process:
 - (a) must be in operation at all times, and
 - (b) must be certified by a competent person annually as being an effective process of disinfection, and
 - (c) must be sufficiently effective so that no sample taken from the system subjected to a test in accordance with the relevant Australian Standard has:
 - (i) a level of legionella of more than 10 colony-forming units per millilitre, or
 - (ii) a heterotrophic plate count of more than 100,000 colony-forming units per millilitre, and
 - (d) must be supplemented by remedial action taken by a competent person after any test where the levels set out in paragraph (c) (i) and (ii) are exceeded.

For the purposes of paragraph (b) above a reference to a competent person is a reference to a person who is a tertiary qualified chemist, chemical engineer, engineer or microbiologist and who has expertise in the relevant field. The expression "annually" is defined in the Regulation to mean that the initial certification must be made within one year from the commencement of the Regulation (that is by 31 August 2001) or within one year of the installation of the system, whichever is the later.

Distributed in accordance with circular list(s):

A 35	B 3	C	D	E	73 Miller Street North Sydney NSW 2060
F	G	H 26	I	J	Locked Mail Bag 961 North Sydney NSW 2059
K 5	L	M	N	P	Telephone (02) 9391 9000 Facsimile (02) 9391 9101

In accordance with the provisions incorporated in the Accounts and Audit Determination, the Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officers and their equivalents, within a public health organisation, shall be held responsible for ensuring the observance of Departmental policy (including circulars and procedure manuals) as issued by the Minister and the Director-General of the Department of Health.

2. *All water cooling systems (cooling towers) are now required to be cleaned and maintained at a maximum interval not exceeding six (6) months.*
3. *All staff as well as any contractors involved with the maintenance of a regulated system including a water cooling system must ensure that appropriate measures are taken:*
 - (a) to minimise contamination of adjoining areas and the ambient environment by aerosols, dust, particulate matter or effluent, and
 - (b) to prevent public access to the area in which the maintenance is being carried out.
4. All hot water systems must have the necessary maintenance performed so as to ensure that at any time when the system is in operation it delivers water at each outlet each time the outlet is turned on at not less than 60 degrees Celsius, once any water standing in the pipe to that outlet before it was turned on has been expelled.
5. All warm-water systems must be maintained in accordance with the requirements specified in the document entitled "Requirements for the provision of cold and heated water" published by the Department of Health as in force from time to time.
6. All health facilities are required to notify the local council the information listed below in regard to water cooling systems and warm water systems:
 - (a) the type of system,
 - (b) the address of the premises on which the system is installed.
 - (c) the name, and the residential and business addresses, of the owner of the premises and, if the operation area on the premises is occupied otherwise than by the owner, those particulars in relation to the occupier,
 - (d) the telephone numbers at which, during business hours and after business hours, the person or persons referred to in paragraph (c) may be contacted,
7. For further Information and clarification regarding any of the above listed microbial control provisions contact the *Environmental Health Section* of the local *Public Health Unit*

This circular is available on the NSW Health Department's Intranet and Internet.

Michael Reid
Director-General