

External Briefing Note

Subject: Recovery of water supplies within buildings

Briefing note: 1/20

Date: May 2020

'Where a building has been empty or less populated than normal, no use or reduced usage can cause the water within the property to deteriorate.'

Background

The restrictions placed on business and people by Jersey government as a measure to restrict the spread of SARS-CoV-2 in mid-March 2020 left many premises either closed or with reduced staff. The pace of the restriction meant that many water systems may have been left stagnant or have a significantly lower water use over this period.

Jersey Water would like to raise awareness of potential hazards associated with under-used water systems and to provide information to non-domestic premises owners and managers which may assist them now and also once they begin preparations to re-open their buildings safely.

This note is to be taken as guidance and information and has been prepared in an effort to provide assistance only. As every building is different, with unique plumbing systems, this advisory note can only be general in nature. Therefore, owners and managers of non-domestic premises should satisfy themselves in relation to the quality of any drinking water or water used for any purposes within the premises that may have become impaired during the non-use/under-use of the building; and obtain any necessary professional advice that is required in advance of reopening.

This note is not intended to address measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in buildings.

Risks

As a result of closure or part closure of buildings, the water systems supplying and within the building may have been subject to stagnation from low or zero use. This can cause higher amounts of leached chemicals or bacterial growth in the water within the building.

Recovery

As the Island re-establishes itself after the restrictions put in place to manage the Covid-19 pandemic, Jersey Water have been maintaining and preparing their own networks and systems to assure the quality of water supplied to each property at the boundary stop tap remains safe to drink and use.

It is now the time for building owners, managers and landlords to take action to manage their own systems thus ensuring that, as staff and customers return, their water systems are safe.

'It is not safe to open as normal without following the guidance available.'

All buildings can be at risk, when water is not being used or turned over regularly, depending on the plumbing installation, water stored within the system can quickly deteriorate in quality and could present a risk to health. The action required will differ depending on your system within your building but it is vitally important to refer to the additional guidance and/or speak with your plumber for additional advice.

Specialist advice should be sought for healthcare settings, swimming pools, leisure centres, gyms, saunas and similar facilities. Equally, food and drink production and hospitality services may require more detailed measures associated with water-using equipment.

Sampling and monitoring of water quality should be continued after the water systems have been cleaned in accordance with water safety plans and maintenance practice.

Support

We would encourage the owner or manager of any non-domestic building to prepare a plan for reopening and to ensure that internal water systems and fittings are safely operational and maintained in advance of planned reopening dates. Where specialist advice is required, it should be sought in a timely manner and allowing for demand on specialist service providers.

We would also caution that last minute uncoordinated flushing of water systems could place exceptional pressure on public water supplies and cause avoidable disruptions to supply. Please consider that you may also find leaks and air-locks within your water systems. We would urge you to get leaks repaired while the property is closed if possible.

If there is any external issue with the water supply when you are preparing to reopen, e.g. loss of pressure or discolouration, please contact us through our website or 01534 707300 and we will investigate any issues in the public water mains network.

Please use the links to the additional information below or visit our website for further assistance [jerseywater.je](https://www.jerseywater.je).

Contact details for more information:

Customer Service: customerservices@jerseywater.je

Water Fittings: waterbyelaws@jerseywater.je

Further Information

- All properties can be at risk, when water is not being used or turned over regularly, depending on installation it can quickly deteriorate in quality and could present a risk to health. Guidance will differ depending on the type of system installed within your property but it is vitally important to refer to the guidance and or speak with your plumber for additional advice.

It is not safe to 'open as normal' without following the guidance available.

Helpful hints and guidance

- Ensure you know the plumbing within your property and identify all pipe or systems in the building that have had low or no turnover.
- Understand how water moves from the main supply through the building and to the taps
- Identify the best way to bring fresh water into your building and develop a systematic flushing plan starting with the first tap supplied with mains water and ending at the furthest.
- If you have a header tank which was not drained down, ensure you have the necessary plans in place to restore the water quality. If you are unsure of the action you should take, seek the advice of your regular plumber.
- Ensure that the water supply is flushed to all taps to refresh the system with at least one pipe volume of mains water. It should be sufficient to run until the water is clear and feels cool to the touch.
- If you have a header tank which feeds all your system, this will need to be addressed first.
- Ensure that all appliances are also thoroughly flushed through before use.
- If the property has any internal filters or water softeners that these should be checked to ensure they are working correctly as outlined in the manufacturer's instruction manual;
- Ensure that if plumbers are required that a reputable plumber is used.
- If your property has hand held sprays ie shower heads, extra care must be taken when flushing for the first time, droplets of water will become airborne and could contain bacteria, consult the guidance and speak with your plumber for information on the appropriate flushing requirements.
- For guidance on legionella and general water management go to:
www.legionellacontrol.org.uk/news/90/
- Looking after water in your home - www.water.org.uk/publication/water-in-the-home/
- Standards - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hot-and-cold-water-supply-storage-and-distribution-systems-for-healthcare-premises>
- Safe water in healthcare systems - www.gov.uk/government/publications/hot-and-cold-water-supply-storage-and-distribution-systems-for-healthcare-premises
- WaterUK Recovering drinking water supplies in buildings and networks after prolonged inactivity
- Legionella Control Association - www.legionellacontrol.org.uk/

Awareness / interest

- <https://www.cibsejournal.com/technical/preventing-covid-19-spreading-in-buildings/>
- <https://www.pwtaq.org/guidance-on-temporary-pool-closure/>

Please note that all references to documents from external sources are correct at the time of publication; however are subject to change. Therefore you are recommended to refer to the original sources directly.

FAQ concerning recovery of buildings and network after prolonged inactivity

1- How do I know my water is ok to drink?

A- JW can assure you the water to your meter point meets all requirements, provided you follow the guidelines, your system and water should be safe.

2- Will I need my water testing?

A- Not if you have followed the guidelines or applied your building management plan.

3- How long do I need to flush for?

A- The system type and design will determine the flushing time required, check the web sites listed or talk with a reputable plumber.

4- I have a water filter, should I change it?

A- Always check manufacturers advice.

5- I am a tenant and not sure what type of system I have or how much water has been used, am I ok to continue.

A- Your landlord / management agent should be familiar with your buildings system and flushing plan, contact them or check the web sites listed.

6- Will I be charged for water I use to flush?

A- Yes, but don't panic, we are here to help with your payment plan.