



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES  
*Aging and Long-Term Support Administration*  
PO Box 45600, Olympia, WA 98504-5600

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AL TSA: NH #2017-017  
S&C 17-30-NH REQUIREMENT TO REDUCE LEGIONELLA RISK IN  
HEALTHCARE FACILITY WATER SYSTEMS TO PREVENT CASES AND  
OUTBREAKS OF LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE (LD)

Dear Nursing Facility/Home Administrator:

In a recent review of LD outbreaks in the United States occurring in 2000–2014, 19% of outbreaks were associated with long-term care facilities and 15% with hospitals. The rate of reported cases of *legionellosis*, which comprises both LD and Pontiac fever (a milder, self-limited, influenza-like illness) has increased 286% in the US during 2000–2014, with approximately 5,000 cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2014. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Service (CMS) is aware of multiple recent LD outbreaks in hospitals and long-term care facilities as reported by the CDC, state and local health departments, or investigated by State Survey Agencies (SA).

**Legionella Infections:** The bacterium *Legionella* can cause a serious type of pneumonia called LD in persons at risk. Those at risk include persons who are at least 50 years old, smokers, or those with underlying medical conditions such as chronic lung disease or immunosuppression. Outbreaks have been linked to poorly maintained water systems in buildings with large or complex water systems including hospitals and long-term care facilities. Transmission can occur via aerosols from devices such as showerheads, cooling towers, hot tubs, and decorative fountains.

**Facility Requirements to Prevent Legionella Infections:** Facilities must develop and adhere to policies and procedures that inhibit microbial growth in building water systems that reduce the risk of growth and spread of legionella and other opportunistic pathogens in water.

Additional information and the S&C memo can be found at: [S&C 17-30-NH](#). Please also take the time to review Dear Provider Letter 2017-005 which outlines water management tools facilities can use to reduce the risk of Legionnaires Disease.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the health and safety of nursing home residents. If you have any questions, please contact your local RCS Field Manager.

Sincerely,

Candace Goehring, Director  
Residential Care Services

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