

# Health Regulation and Protection Circular

Issued by the Deputy Chief Public Health Officer

## IMPORTANT MESSAGE REGARDING MANAGEMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE OF PUBLIC HEALTH SIGNIFICANCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In the face of ongoing disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, owners, operators and relevant technical and maintenance staff of infrastructure of public health significance are urged to ensure that effective business continuity plans are in place to support the appropriate management, maintenance and monitoring of certain types of systems including;

- > Cooling water systems
- > Warm water systems
- > Manufactured water systems
- > Drinking water systems
- > Community facilities and public outdoor spaces
- > Wastewater treatment plants
- > Community wastewater management systems
- > Public swimming and spa pools

This is vital in ensuring that public health risks associated with a range of pathogens (including *Legionella*, *Cryptosporidium*, *Mycobacterium* and *E. coli*) are effectively managed.

Effective arrangements must remain in place to ensure:

- > ongoing system maintenance and monitoring
- > continuation of servicing and disinfection programs
- > effective decommissioning and recommissioning programs
- > adherence to relevant regulatory requirements and any associated conditions of approval
- > access is provided to authorised officers to conduct inspections and investigate as required
- > arrangements are in place to safely attend sites that are subject to increased infection control measures (such as aged care facilities)

System owners and operators need to consider risks to business continuity (including potential disruptions to staff and contractor availability and the accessibility and supply of parts, equipment and chemicals) that may directly impact system operation.





## Manufactured water systems

*Legionella* bacteria can cause cases and outbreaks of serious respiratory disease. Therefore, cooling water systems and warm water systems must be maintained in accordance with the South Australian Public Health (Legionella) Regulations 2013. Although not subject to specific regulation, other drinking/potable water systems and devices such as chilled/boiled water units and ice machines also have the potential to become colonised with *Legionella*. Owners and operators of these systems have a duty to ensure that associated risks are effectively managed, particularly where these systems are available to vulnerable populations (such as those in hospitals and health and aged care facilities). Any systems that are decommissioned or placed into standby for extended periods must be recommissioned as per the relevant regulatory requirements (or in accordance with best practice protocols).

For further information; please visit

[Legionella regulations and guidelines](#)

[enHealth Guidelines for Legionella Control](#)

## Public swimming and spa pools

Public pools are included in the range of community services and facilities that have been impacted by government restrictions on non-essential gatherings. Owners of public swimming and spa pools must ensure that they remain informed of any emergency declarations or directions and respond accordingly.

If not properly managed, public swimming and spa pools can provide ideal conditions for the growth of a number of different disease-causing microorganisms. Therefore, owners and operators of public swimming pools and spa pools must maintain them in accordance with the South Australian Public Health (General) Regulations 2013 at all times when they are open to the public.

If a public pool is shut for an extended period, the owner must ensure that compliance is achieved with all regulatory requirements before the pool is re-opened to the public. If a spa pool is to be closed for an extended period it is recommended that it is completely thoroughly cleaned and completely drained of water to prevent the growth of *Legionella* in pipework.

For further information; please visit

[Public Swimming and Spa Pool Regulations](#)

## Wastewater Management Systems

Community wastewater management systems and wastewater treatment plants provide essential sewerage services for townships where SA Water infrastructure is not available. These systems provide for the collection and management of wastewater generated in these communities.



Wastewater systems require an approval through SA Health under the South Australian Public Health (Wastewater) Regulations 2013. Operators must ensure that wastewater systems are operated, maintained and monitored in accordance with the conditions of their approval to ensure the ongoing protection of public health. Risk Management Plans for recycled water supply and re-use are required as part of the approval. Operators and end-users must ensure that their Risk Management Plans for recycled water supply and re-use are up-to-date and are being implemented.

Operators are reminded that they must continue to notify SA Health of wastewater incidents in accordance with their system approvals and emergency incident protocols.

For further information; please visit

[Wastewater legislation and Codes](#)

### Drinking water

Well managed and maintained drinking water systems provide an essential service for the communities that they serve. These systems should be managed in accordance with their approved risk management plans. Monitoring needs to be undertaken and incidents reported to SA Health in accordance with the approved plan. If difficulties arise in sample transport or laboratory availability these should be raised with SA Health.

For further information; please visit

[Safe Drinking Water legislation and Regulations](#)

### Community facilities and public outdoor spaces

Owners of community facilities and public outdoor spaces must ensure that they comply with government directives in relation to non-essential gatherings. Where certain facilities are permitted to operate, cleaning programs must be maintained. High touch surfaces (such as drinking water fountains) should be regularly cleaned and disinfected. Signage to promote good personal hygiene may be considered.

## Advice for Public Health Authorities and Environmental Health Officers

Business continuity plans should be in place to ensure that public health authorities can sustain effective public and environmental health services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Capacity to undertake public health surveillance activities should be maintained, and this includes responding to public health incidents and investigations as they arise.

Where there is a need to undertake sampling for microbiological analysis, laboratory service providers should be contacted prior to the collection of any food or environmental samples.

### Further information

For the latest official COVID-19 news and updates in South Australia and Australia; please visit

SA Government – Emergency Directions, Declarations & Advice

<https://www.sa.gov.au/covid-19>

SA Health – Advice and Updates

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/health+topics/health+topics+a--+z/covid+2019/novel+coronavirus>

Australian Government Updates

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

Yours sincerely



**Dr Chris Lease**

Deputy Chief Public Health Officer  
Health Regulation and Protection

30/03/2020

---

### For more information

**Health Protection Programs  
Health Regulation and Protection  
PO Box 6  
Rundle Mall SA 5000  
Telephone: 08 8226 7100  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au)**