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President's message: New ASHRAE legionella standard

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There is a new ASHRAE legionella standard rolling out this summer. ASHRAE Standard 188 will be the first U.S. risk management standard that establishes specific requirements for prevention of Legionnaires' disease associated with building water systems in all types of buildings. While there has not been much public attention about Legionnaires' disease in recent years, according to a recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Legionnaires disease cases have nearly tripled during the past ten years. To respond to this growing threat, ASHRAE will soon be issuing Standard 188; Prevention of Legionellosis Associated with Building Water Systems. The new standard will require that Facility and Property Managers implement stronger safeguards through pro-active risk assessment and risk management.

Specific risk factors called out in the standard are:

- * Multiple housing units with one or more centralized water heaters;
- * More than 10 stories (including levels below grade);
- * Cooling tower or evaporative condenser;
- * Whirlpools or spas;
- * Devices that release aerosols (ornamental fountains, misters, humidifiers);
- * Incoming potable water containing less than 0.5 ppm residual halogen such as chlorine;
- * Inpatient health care facility;
- * Occupants primarily older than 65; and
- * Occupants receiving chemotherapy for cancer or bone marrow transplantation.

If a property manager identifies risk factors after conducting the survey, then a risk management team must be assembled to prepare and implement a plan to prevent the threat posed by Legionella bacteria.

Standard 188 requires that the risk assessment team include persons with knowledge of Legionella and HACCP. This will likely require seeking outside consultation with professionals.

The standard is not a government law, but will have the force of law. It is important for building owners and managers to pay attention to this standard. From a legal standpoint, it is serious more serious if you do not comply with this standard. A single case of Legionnaires' can dramatically affect the bottom line of any organization.

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