



Flushing Guidance for Buildings with Low Occupancy or No Occupancy During Covid-19

Reduced or no water use in buildings during COVID-19 responses can result in both microbial and chemical (in particular, lead) health risks to occupants. In order to minimize the potential health risks of occupants in closed or reduced occupancy buildings, the following guidance is recommended during periods of reduced use and before the building returns to normal use.

- The building's plumbing should be occasionally flushed during periods of reduced use and thoroughly flushed before full re-occupancy. Begin at the meter or point of entry into the building. Flush all fixtures, including all showerheads. Flush outwards as you go through the building.
- Consider draining any storage tanks, such as water heaters and softeners, to ensure turnover using manufacturer protocols for routine maintenance. Check for sediment that may have collected during the stagnation period.
- Particles can be released during flushing and may clog aerators, filters, showerheads, and other mechanical equipment. You may need to remove these before flushing or clean them after flushing.
- Continue flushing until there is fresh water throughout the building. Flushing from the point of entry out to the ends of the plumbing system can ensure fresh water is in place. The presence of chlorine in the cold water supply is also an indication that fresh water has entered the system. A chlorine residual test, measured at the furthestmost outlet, will show whether chlorine is present. Swimming pool supply stores may be able to provide inexpensive chlorine test kits.
- Ice machines should be cleaned using manufacturer protocols. After flushing, at least three batches should be dumped to waste before allowing the public to utilize ice.
- If a facility manager wishes to check the bacteriological safety of the building's water supply, bacteriological sample bottles can be obtained from the local county Arkansas Department of Health office and submitted to the Arkansas Department of Health's Public Health Laboratory. There is a \$17 fee per sample. Instructions for collection and submission of private water samples can be found here https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/images/uploads/pdf/Submitting_a_water_sample_updated_2019.pdf
- For safety details for those providing the flushing visit: https://esprinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/FINAL_Reducing-Risk-to-Staff-Flushing-Buildings-20200501.pdf



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