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Building checks essential before reopening

Master Plumbers ACT is advising government agencies and businesses that are re-opening their premises after a COVID shut down period, to ensure their building is “plumbing-ready” to prevent the risk of serious health threats.

President of the Association, Tom Martin, said that owners and operators of dormant buildings need to “flush” building water systems prior to reopening as buildings that have been closed for a period or have had reduced usage may experience problems with water quality due to stagnation.

“The water quality can degrade over this time and becomes a silent but serious issue with the real possibility of Legionella, pathogens, lead, and disinfection by-products contaminating water supply. This has the potential to cause very serious public health issues,” he said.

“With the likelihood that operators in the hospitality sector, such as restaurants, may open soon, this is a very timely and critical issue”.

Mr Martin recommends that in the days leading up to reopening there are a range of considerations that property managers and business owners should undertake to prepare the water system of the dormant building as part of a comprehensive check and “flushing” of all water and sewerage activities.

“This includes checking all areas where water enters the building ie all taps, showerheads, water fountains, etc to ensure this is all flowing freely with no obstruction and, more importantly, to clear out any bacteria. We would then check all devices that access water such as washing machines, dishwashers, ice machines are working correctly, and again that they are clear of bacteria.

“Plumbers would also need to check cross connections, such as hoses connected to taps, to prevent backflow into drinking water and the risk of contamination,” said Mr Martin.

Executive Officer of Master Plumbers, Ms Leigh Watson, says that all businesses should be certified as fit for reopening through clearing the plumbing system, in the interests of public health and safety.

“Operators should check with their landlords or property managers that the above measures are undertaken before opening to the public. The last thing we want is another community health issue,” she said.

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