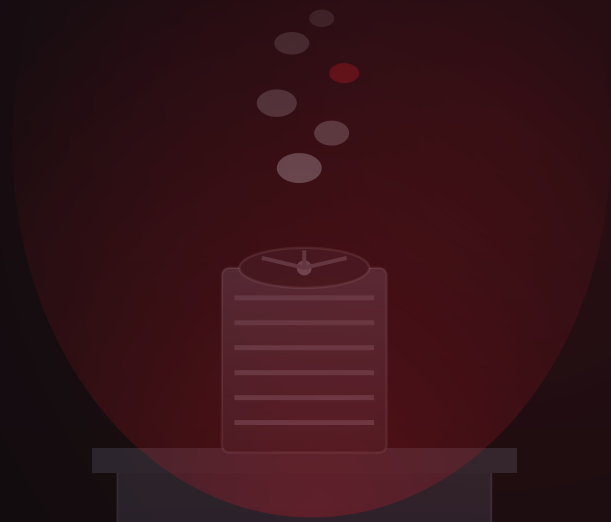




• PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT • VOL. 01

Protecting People. Protecting Buildings.

The critical importance of cooling tower maintenance in preventing Legionnaires' disease.

Lessons from the 2026 New York City Legionnaires' disease cluster, with a focused analysis of risk across South Florida.

00 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cooling towers are not mechanical assets alone. They are public health infrastructure.

A cooling tower moves building heat by evaporating water into the outdoor air. When that water is not properly maintained, it can also aerosolize **Legionella** bacteria and carry it for distances measured in city blocks. Poorly maintained towers are the most common identified source of community Legionnaires' disease clusters, and the 2026 Upper East Side cluster in Manhattan is the latest confirmation.¹

14

Confirmed cases in the current NYC Upper East Side cluster as of July 4, 2026, across three ZIP codes²

10

Roughly 1 in 10 people who contract Legionnaires' disease die from it; about 1 in 4 when acquired in a healthcare facility⁵

5.5_x

Rise in U.S. reported incidence from 2000 to 2018, the sharpest sustained increase of any reportable respiratory infection⁶

~60%

Share of all U.S. Legionnaires' outbreaks reported in Florida in 2020, the highest of any state^a

The finding

Chemical water treatment is necessary, but it is not sufficient on its own. *Legionella* colonizes **scale, sediment, corrosion, and biofilm** inside the tower. Those conditions are governed by the mechanical health of the system: basin cleanliness, fill and drift-eliminator integrity, fan and pump performance, and the absence of stagnation and dead legs. A tower can pass a chemistry check and still put occupants at risk if it is mechanically neglected.

The mandate

ANSI/ASHRAE Standard 188 and the CDC water management toolkit both require a documented, building-specific program that combines treatment with mechanical control measures, monitoring, and corrective action.⁹ In healthcare, this is enforced by CMS. Jurisdictions including New York now mandate registration, inspection, and testing, and litigation exposure after an outbreak is severe.³

South Florida is a year-round *Legionella* climate. Tower water in Miami-Dade and Broward rarely leaves the bacteria's ideal growth band of 77 to 113°F, so systems here never get the winter reset that northern towers receive.

ANALYSIS: ABC MECHANICAL · GROWTH RANGE PER CDC⁷

This publication explains what *Legionella* is, what the national and Florida data show, how a cooling tower becomes a health risk, what the standards require, and how a disciplined inspection and maintenance program closes the gap. ABC Mechanical operates as the mechanical reliability and inspection authority that works alongside licensed water treatment professionals so that every element of tower operation supports equipment reliability, energy efficiency, regulatory compliance, and occupant safety.

SECTION 01 · THE CASE

UPPER EAST SIDE, MANHATTAN · 2026

— 01 ON THIS DAY

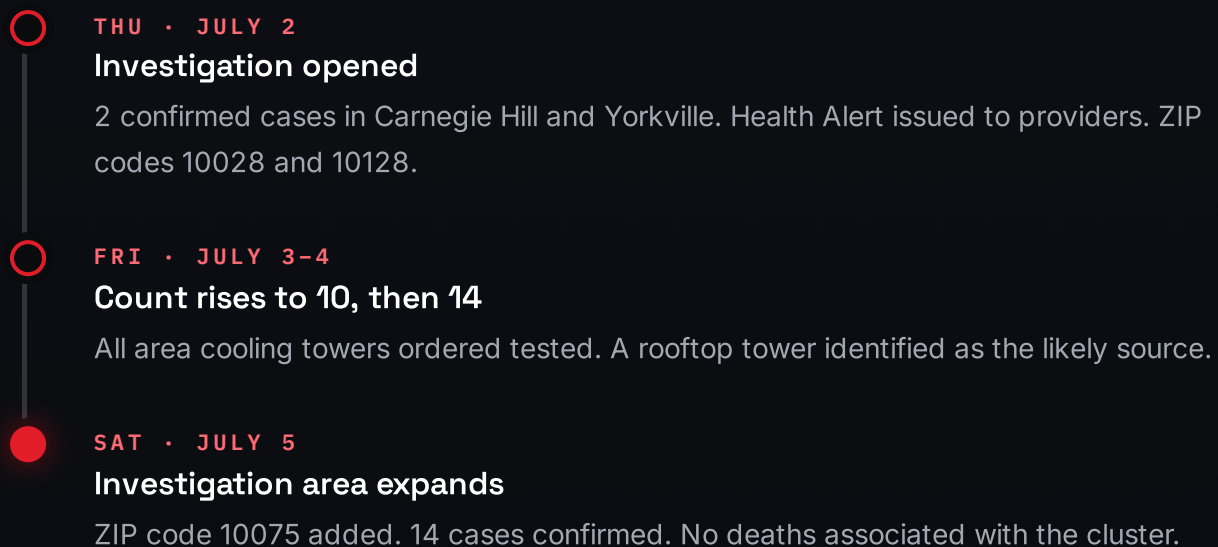
A cooling tower on the Upper East Side, and a cluster that grew sevenfold in four days.

On July 2, 2026, the New York City Health Department opened an investigation into a likely community cluster of Legionnaires' disease in the Upper East Side neighborhoods of Carnegie Hill and Yorkville. It began with two confirmed cases.¹

The city normally waits for three confirmed cases before declaring a cluster. It moved earlier this time to find the source and prevent additional infections.^{4b} The decision was quickly validated: by the evening of July 4, the department reported **14 confirmed cases** and expanded the investigation area from two ZIP codes to three.²

Health officials identified a cooling tower atop a building in the affected area as the likely source and began sampling and testing water from every cooling tower system in the vicinity.¹ Officials emphasized that the disease is not spread person to person, and that it remained safe to drink tap water, shower, and run air conditioners, because tower mist blows outward and does not enter a building's plumbing or window units.¹

This outbreak is a reminder to every building owner that cooling tower maintenance is not a facilities line item. It is a public health responsibility.



ZIP 10028

ZIP 10128

ZIP 10075

FIG 1.1 Affected area: Carnegie Hill and Yorkville. Source: NYC Health Department press releases and updates, July 2026.¹²

Why officials looked at cooling towers first

Legionella grows in warm water. A cooling tower holds a large volume of warm, recirculating water and, by design, throws a fine mist into the outdoor air. That combination is the textbook mechanism for a community cluster, and it is why past New York outbreaks have repeatedly traced back to towers.¹ When several people in one geographic area fall ill within the same short window, an aerosol source that can travel outdoors is the first hypothesis, and rooftop towers are the first place investigators sample.

The stakes, one summer earlier

The current cluster has caused no deaths so far. The contrast with the prior year is the reason for urgency. In the summer of 2025, a Legionnaires' outbreak in Central Harlem sickened **114 people, hospitalized 90, and killed 7**. Investigators matched the strain found in patients to cooling towers at two locations, including a hospital and a nearby construction site.² That outbreak led New York to strengthen its cooling tower law again.³

A waterborne bacterium that turns a cooling system into a delivery mechanism.

Legionnaires' disease is a severe pneumonia caused by *Legionella* bacteria. People become infected in one way only: by breathing in small water droplets that carry the bacteria into the lungs. It does not spread from person to person.¹

The temperature that decides everything

Legionella multiplies fastest in warm, stagnant water. Cooling tower basins in warm climates sit inside this band year-round.

RELATIVE GROWTH VS
WATER TEMPERATURE



FIG 2.1 Legionella grows between 77°F and 113°F, fastest near 95°F. ASHRAE 188 control strategy keeps hot water above 140°F and cold water below 68°F. Source: CDC control guidance and ASHRAE Standard 188.⁷⁹

HOW IT GROWS

Warm water and a place to hide

Legionella is common in natural fresh water at harmless levels. It becomes dangerous when it enters a building water system that holds warm, slow-moving water and offers surfaces to colonize: **scale, sediment, rust, and biofilm**. Inside a neglected cooling tower, the bacteria multiply rapidly and shelter within the slime layer, where they resist disinfectant.

Mist is the vehicle

A cooling tower is engineered to break water into fine droplets and release them as vapor. If the water carries *Legionella*, those droplets become an airborne aerosol. Drift can travel well beyond the building and be inhaled by people who never entered it. One epidemiologist notes that contaminated tower drift can spread for miles.^a

Legionnaires' disease vs. Pontiac fever

The same bacteria cause two different illnesses. **Legionnaires' disease** is a serious, sometimes fatal pneumonia that usually requires hospitalization and antibiotics. Symptoms appear 2 to 14 days after exposure and include high fever, cough, chills, and difficulty breathing.¹¹ **Pontiac fever** is a milder, flu-like illness without pneumonia that typically resolves on its own within a few days. The distinction matters clinically, but both signal the same underlying failure: an uncontrolled water system.

PEOPLE AT HIGHEST RISK

- ◆ **Adults 50 and older**, the group carrying most reported cases
- ◆ **Current and former smokers**
- ◆ **People with chronic lung disease** such as COPD or emphysema
- ◆ **Immunocompromised individuals**, including cancer and transplant patients
- ◆ **Hospital patients and residents of long-term care and assisted living**

Risk climbs with age. In healthcare settings, where patients are already vulnerable, the fatality rate is far higher than in the general population.⁵

A disease that is getting more common, not less.

Legionnaires' disease is a nationally notifiable condition. CDC surveillance shows reported cases rising almost without interruption since 2000, with a pronounced summer and early-fall season.⁴

U.S. reported incidence, 2000–2021

CASES PER
100,000

Reported confirmed cases per 100,000 population. Incidence rose roughly 5.5-fold, peaked in 2018, dipped in the first pandemic year, and rebounded in

2021.

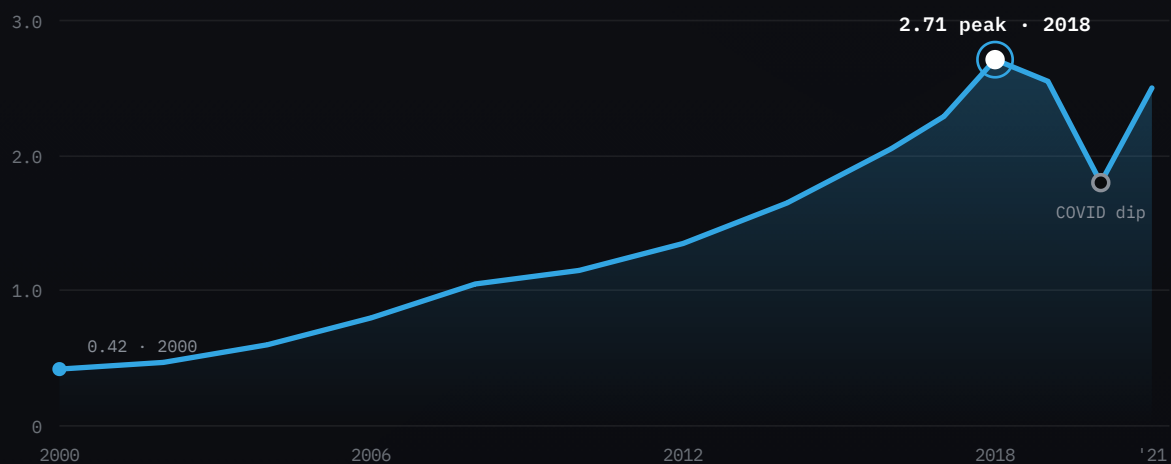


FIG 3.1 Age-standardized incidence rose from 0.42 per 100,000 in 2000 to a peak of 2.71 in 2018. Source: CDC surveillance and Emerging Infectious Diseases, 1992–2018.^{4,6} Values indicative of CDC-reported incidence.

1 in 10

Overall case fatality rate for Legionnaires' disease⁵

1 in 4

Fatality rate when the disease is acquired in a healthcare facility⁵

8–18K

Estimated U.S. hospitalizations for Legionnaires' disease each year¹¹

~64%

Reported cases with no identified source, a sign of widespread undetected exposure⁶

The real number is higher

Legionnaires' disease is difficult to distinguish from other pneumonias and requires specific testing that is often not ordered, so surveillance undercounts it. CDC notes cases are likely underdiagnosed, and researchers have estimated that the true annual burden in the United States could exceed 100,000.^a Nearly all reported patients are hospitalized, and close to half require intensive care.¹⁵

Where it concentrates

Incidence is not evenly distributed. CDC data show the highest rates in the **Middle Atlantic, East North Central, and New England** regions, and consistently higher incidence among Black or African American populations.⁶ The pattern points to the built environment: dense clusters of older, complex buildings with aging water systems and large populations at risk. As the next section shows, Florida is its own case.

04 SOUTH FLORIDA FOCUS

Florida leads the nation in outbreaks. South Florida is built for it.

Florida's reported incidence tracks at the top of the national range, and its outbreak burden is disproportionate. In 2020, Florida accounted for close to **60 percent of all Legionnaires' outbreaks reported in the United States**, and 38 percent of outbreaks in healthcare facilities.^a The distribution within the state mirrors the national pattern: most cases occur in adults 65 and older, with peak incidence between 75 and 84, and a season that runs from August through October.¹³

2.7

Florida's reported legionellosis rate per 100,000 in 2024, at the level of the U.S. 2018 peak¹²

~250

Legionnaires' cases reported in Florida in a typical year, roughly 200 to 300 annually^a

~60%

Florida's share of U.S. Legionnaires' outbreaks in 2020, highest in the nation^a

38%

Florida's share of U.S. healthcare-facility outbreaks in 2020^a

Why South Florida carries elevated structural risk

Legionnaires' disease is a function of climate, building stock, and population. Miami-Dade and Broward score high on all three. The following factors compound rather than add.



A year-round growth climate

Legionella multiplies between 77 and 113°F. In South Florida, ambient temperatures and municipal water rarely drop out of that band. Cooling tower basins stay in the danger zone twelve months a year.



No seasonal reset

Northern towers idle each winter, which interrupts biofilm growth. South Florida towers run continuously to meet year-round cooling load. Continuous operation means continuous aerosol generation and uninterrupted scale and biofilm buildup.



High humidity, persistent drift

Elevated relative humidity helps aerosolized droplets stay airborne and travel farther from the tower before evaporating, widening the potential exposure radius around a contaminated system.



Dense high-rise building stock

Condominium towers, hospitality, office, and healthcare buildings across Miami-Dade and Broward rely on cooling towers and evaporative condensers. This is precisely the building class where an unmanaged tower endangers a large population.



A large at-risk population

South Florida has one of the country's highest concentrations of adults over 65, the group that carries most cases and the highest fatality risk. Assisted living and long-term care density compounds the exposure.



Healthcare concentration

The region's dense hospital and long-term care footprint serves immunocompromised patients. Florida already over-indexes on healthcare-associated outbreaks, where fatality rates reach one in four.⁵

Modeled county case burden

ILLUSTRATIVE
ESTIMATE

COUNTY	POPULATION (APPROX.)	MODELED CASES / YR
Miami-Dade	~2.65 million	~72
Broward	~1.95 million	~53

COUNTY	POPULATION (APPROX.)	MODELED CASES / YR
Palm Beach	~1.55 million	~42
Tri-county total	~6.15 million	~167

Modeled estimate only. Florida's 2024 statewide reported rate of 2.7 per 100,000¹² applied to approximate county population. These are not confirmed county case counts, and actual reported figures vary year to year. Presented to illustrate scale of exposure across the tri-county region.

FIG 4.1 If the tri-county region tracked the statewide rate, it would account for well over one hundred cases annually, concentrated in the exact building and population profile most vulnerable to tower-borne exposure.

Florida is not theoretical

The risk is active and current. In December 2025, Orange County reported roughly **95 to 100 cases** of legionellosis, the most in the state's thirty years of record keeping, with a portion tied to a single fitness facility. Around the same period, Legionella was detected in the drinking water of a federal courthouse in Orlando.^b

The 2026 Manhattan cluster and the 2025 Florida spikes are the same story in two climates. In New York, cold winters at least pause tower operation. In South Florida, the conditions that let Legionella flourish are present every month of the year, which raises the standard of care that a competent operator must maintain.

In South Florida, there is no low season for cooling tower risk. Maintenance discipline is the only variable a building owner controls.

ANALYSIS: ABC MECHANICAL

The same design that rejects heat can broadcast bacteria.

A cooling tower works by cascading warm water over fill media while a fan pulls air through it. Evaporation carries heat away. That process also creates the exact

conditions *Legionella* needs, and a route for it to escape into the air.⁷

Cross-section: where bacteria multiply

INDUCED-DRAFT
COUNTERFLOW TOWER

Red zones mark where *Legionella* colonizes. Degraded components let contaminated aerosol escape.



1 **Fan & motor** draw air up through the tower

2 **Drift eliminators** capture droplets; when degraded, more aerosol escapes

3 **Hot water inlet** and distribution headers spray warm water

4 **Fill media** maximizes water-air contact and shelters biofilm

5 **Louvers / air intake** admit outdoor air

6 **Cold water basin** collects cooled water for recirculation

7 **Sediment & scale** in the basin is a primary *Legionella* reservoir

8 **Recirculation pump** returns water to the system

FIG 5.1 *Legionella* colonizes fill media biofilm and basin sediment. Effective drift eliminators are the last barrier before aerosol reaches the outdoor air. Source: CDC cooling tower control guidance and ASHRAE Guideline 12.⁷¹⁰

The six conditions that turn a tower into a hazard

01 · BIOFILM

A slime layer coats internal surfaces and shelters Legionella from disinfectant. Biofilm is the single most important habitat inside the tower.

02 · SCALE

Mineral deposits from evaporation build on fill and heat-transfer surfaces, insulating bacteria and reducing efficiency at the same time.

03 · CORROSION

Rust and pitting create rough surfaces that harbor bacteria and release iron and nutrients that feed microbial growth. Coastal salt air accelerates it.

04 · SEDIMENT

Dirt, debris, and organic matter settle in the basin, forming a nutrient-rich reservoir that protects Legionella from treatment chemicals.

05 · STAGNATION

Dead legs, idle cells, and low-flow runs let water sit warm and untreated. Stagnant water is where colonization concentrates.

06 · WEAK TREATMENT

Inadequate biocide, poor blowdown, and drifting water chemistry allow all of the above to compound between service visits.

SECTION 06 · CONTROL

WATER MANAGEMENT & TREATMENT

06 THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER MANAGEMENT

Treatment protects the equipment, the energy bill, and the people downwind.

A properly managed water program does four things at once: it protects heat-transfer surfaces and extends equipment life, it preserves efficiency by preventing scale, it keeps the system in regulatory compliance, and it protects occupant and public health by suppressing bacterial growth.⁷

DISINFECTION

Biocides

Oxidizing biocides such as chlorine or bromine maintain a measurable residual that kills bacteria in the bulk water throughout the day. **Non-oxidizing biocides** are rotated in to penetrate biofilm and prevent organisms from adapting to a single chemistry.

PROTECTION

Inhibitors

Corrosion inhibitors protect metal surfaces from the pitting that harbors bacteria and destroys equipment. **Scale inhibitors** keep dissolved minerals in solution so they do not deposit on fill and heat-transfer surfaces.

BALANCE

Control & blowdown

Conductivity control and automated **blowdown** discharge concentrated water and replace it with fresh make-up, holding water chemistry in range. **Testing and microbiological monitoring** verify that control measures are actually working.

Chemical treatment alone is not enough. Biocide cannot reach bacteria sheltered inside scale, sediment, and biofilm on neglected mechanical surfaces. Mechanical maintenance and water treatment are two halves of one system, and a failure in either half creates risk.

PRINCIPLE: CDC CONTROL TOOLKIT⁷ • ASHRAE GUIDELINE 12¹⁰

CDC engineering controls for cooling towers

The CDC toolkit defines the physical control measures that a water management program must implement and verify. These are mechanical and design controls, not chemistry alone.⁷

- ◆ Operate at the lowest practical water temperature, ideally outside the 77–113°F growth range where the process allows
- ◆ Install and maintain **high-efficiency drift eliminators** to minimize the release of aerosol
- ◆ Locate cooling towers **at least 25 feet from building air intakes** so drift is not drawn into ventilation
- ◆ Flush low-flow runs and dead legs **at least weekly** to eliminate stagnation
- ◆ Automate anti-scale, anti-corrosion, and disinfectant dosing and monitoring; use automated blowdown

- ◆ Perform an **offline disinfection and full cleaning at least annually**, plus startup and shutdown procedures

07 THE STANDARDS AND THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE

Legionella control is now a documented obligation, not a best effort.

A recognized framework governs how building water systems must be managed. Regulators, accreditors, and insurers increasingly treat that framework as the standard of care, and courts treat a missing or unfollowed program as negligence.⁹

ANSI/ASHRAE Standard 188

Standard 188, *Legionellosis: Risk Management for Building Water Systems*, was first published in 2015 and updated in 2018 and 2021. It sets the minimum requirements for managing Legionella risk across the design, operation, maintenance, and expansion of building water systems, for both new and existing buildings.⁹ Any building with a cooling tower falls within its scope and must develop a documented Water Management Program.

The standard is not aspirational. CMS requires Medicare-certified healthcare facilities to maintain water management policies consistent with Standard 188, and jurisdictions including New York reference it directly in law.⁹ ASHRAE Guideline 12 supplements the standard with technical guidance, and ASHRAE Standard 180 governs the underlying HVAC inspection and maintenance discipline.¹⁰

THE WATER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM, IN SEVEN PARTS

- 01 Water management team.** Assign accountable roles for the program.
- 02 System inventory & flow diagrams.** Map every component where Legionella could grow or aerosolize.
- 03 Hazard analysis.** Identify where conditions favor growth and spread.
- 04 Control measures & limits.** Define control points and acceptable ranges for each.
- 05 Monitoring.** Measure whether each control stays within limits.
- 06 Corrective action.** Define what happens when a limit is exceeded.
- 07 Verification & validation.** Confirm the program runs as designed and actually controls risk.

Framework per ASHRAE Standard 188 and the CDC water management toolkit.^{8,9}

AUTHORITY	WHAT IT REQUIRES	APPLIES TO
ANSI/ASHRAE 188	Documented Water Management Program for building water systems	Any building with a cooling tower
ASHRAE Guideline 12 & Std 180	Technical control guidance and HVAC inspection and maintenance requirements	Cooling towers and HVAC systems
CDC Water Management Toolkit	Step-by-step program development and cooling tower control measures	Recommended for all complex water systems
CMS (federal)	Water management policies consistent with ASHRAE 188	Medicare-certified healthcare facilities
NYC Local Law 77 & 159	Register, inspect every 90 days, clean at least twice yearly, test water	All NYC cooling towers (~5,000 systems)
Florida DOH	Reportable disease surveillance and outbreak investigation protocol	Statewide; no cooling tower registry mandate

FIG 7.1 Sources: ASHRAE, CDC, CMS, NYC Health Department, Florida Department of Health.³⁸⁹¹³

New York shows where regulation is heading

After a 2015 outbreak in the South Bronx, New York City enacted Local Law 77, requiring every cooling tower to be registered, inspected by a qualified person every 90 days while operating, cleaned at least twice a year, and tested.³ After the 2025 Central Harlem outbreak, the city strengthened the rules again through Local Law 159, which took effect May 7, 2026 and increased *Legionella* testing from quarterly to monthly.³ Penalties for noncompliance run from several hundred to several thousand dollars per violation per day.^{3b}

Florida has no equivalent statewide cooling tower registry. That absence is precisely why a disciplined, self-imposed program is the differentiator for a responsible South Florida building owner.

The science of Legionella control is well understood. The failures are almost never knowledge gaps. They are documentation failures and accountability gaps: a skipped test, an unlogged biocide dose, an overdue basin cleaning with no escalation.

INDUSTRY CONSENSUS ON OUTBREAK LIABILITY^c

Liability follows the paperwork. Legionnaires' litigation is common and usually settled under confidential terms, which keeps it out of public view but does not reduce its cost.^a Insurers now demand documented Water Management Programs, and after an outbreak the first thing produced in discovery is the maintenance record. A complete, defensible inspection and treatment file is both the best protection for occupants and the best protection for the owner.

08 INSPECTION FREQUENCIES AND SAMPLE CHECKLIST

A defensible program has a cadence. Here is what it looks like.

The activities below synthesize CDC toolkit guidance, ASHRAE Standard 188, and the strengthened requirements now in force in leading jurisdictions. Frequencies are the recommended floor for a tower in operation, not the ceiling.⁷⁹

Cooling tower inspection and maintenance cadence			WHILE IN OPERATION
ACTIVITY	FREQUENCY	WHY IT MATTERS	
Chemical parameters pH, conductivity, biocide residual, temperature	Daily	Holds water chemistry in range; the first line of defense against biological growth, scale, and corrosion.	
Visual system inspection basin, fill, drift, water clarity, condition	Weekly	Catches fouling, sediment, and component wear early, before conditions favor colonization.	

ACTIVITY	FREQUENCY	WHY IT MATTERS
Legionella and bacteriological testing	Monthly	Trends microbial control and triggers corrective action; leading jurisdictions now require monthly testing, up from quarterly.
Drift eliminator condition	Quarterly	The last physical barrier before aerosol reaches the outdoor air. Degraded eliminators multiply exposure.
Compliance inspection by qualified person	Every 90 days	Independent verification that the program is being followed, distinct from routine maintenance.
Basin and mechanical cleaning	2× / year min.	Removes the sediment and scale reservoir where Legionella is protected from treatment.
Offline disinfection and full cleaning	Annually min.	Resets biofilm and scale accumulation that routine treatment cannot fully remove.
Startup and shutdown procedures	Seasonal / >5 days idle	Prevents restart of a contaminated, stagnant system and safe layup of an idle one.
Water Management Program review and validation	Annually	Confirms the program still controls risk as the building and systems change.

FIG 8.1 Recommended minimum cadence for a cooling tower in operation.
 Sources: CDC Legionella control toolkit, ASHRAE Standard 188, and NYC Local Law 77 and 159.³⁷⁹

Sample cooling tower maintenance checklist

A working checklist a facility team can adopt. It is a starting framework to be tailored to the specific system, its water treatment program, and applicable local requirements.

☒ DAILY

- ✓ Record **water temperature** at the basin and confirm it against control limits
- ✓ Verify **biocide residual** and disinfectant feed operation
- ✓ Check **pH and conductivity**; confirm automated blowdown is functioning
- ✓ Confirm make-up water supply and float or level control operation
- ✓ Log all readings and any deviations with corrective notes

✓ WEEKLY

- ✓ Inspect the **basin** for sediment, debris, and biological growth
- ✓ Inspect **fill media and distribution nozzles** for fouling and even flow
- ✓ Check **drift eliminators** for damage, gaps, and displacement
- ✓ Verify **fan, motor, and bearing** condition; listen for vibration or noise
- ✓ Flush low-flow runs and dead legs to eliminate stagnation

✓ QUARTERLY

- ✓ Complete a **compliance inspection** by a qualified person
- ✓ Inspect and document **drift eliminator integrity** in detail
- ✓ Assess corrosion, scale, and coating condition on wetted surfaces
- ✓ Review water treatment trend data and test results

✓ ANNUALLY & SEASONAL

- ✓ Perform **offline disinfection and full mechanical cleaning**
- ✓ Execute **startup disinfection** before seasonal operation or after idle periods
- ✓ Execute **shutdown cleaning** before layup
- ✓ Review and validate the **Water Management Program**

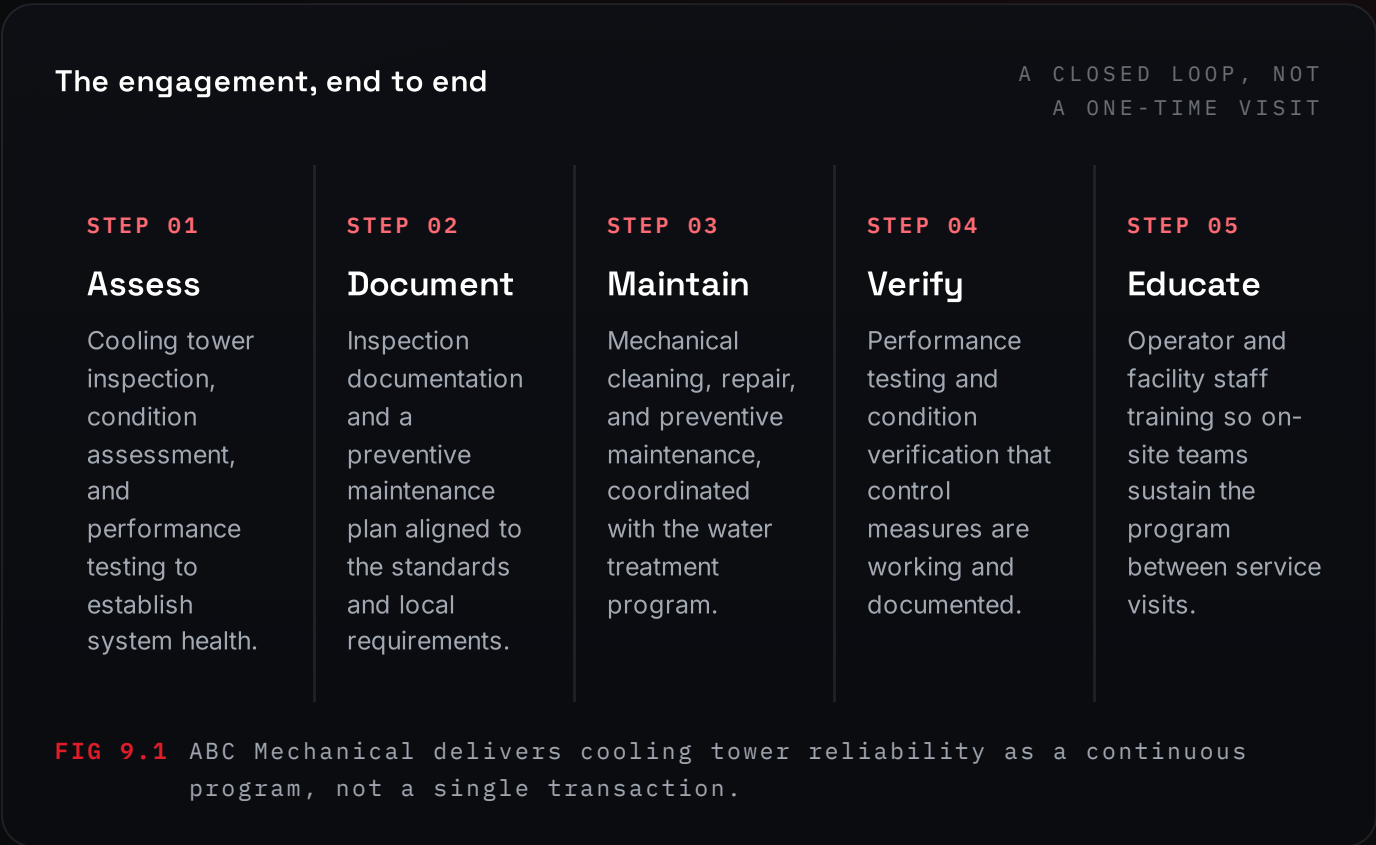
✓ DOCUMENTATION

- ✓ Maintain daily treatment, inspection, and corrective-action records
- ✓ Retain all records for the period required by local regulation

This checklist is provided for educational reference. It does not replace a site-specific Water Management Program, the water treatment provider's protocol, or applicable code. ABC Mechanical develops tailored programs for each system it services.

Mechanical reliability is the half of Legionella control that most programs neglect.

Water treatment providers manage chemistry. ABC Mechanical manages the mechanical condition that chemistry depends on. A veteran-owned commercial HVAC contractor with more than twenty-five years of operating experience, ABC Mechanical works alongside licensed water treatment professionals so that every element of cooling tower operation supports equipment reliability, energy efficiency, regulatory compliance, and occupant safety.



OPERATIONS & COORDINATION

- ◆ Startup and shutdown procedures
- ◆ Water management coordination
- ◆ Vendor collaboration
- ◆ Operator and facility staff education

ABC Mechanical does not replace a building's water treatment provider. It closes the mechanical gap that treatment cannot reach, and it produces the documentation that proves the work was done.

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CONCLUSION

PROTECTING PEOPLE. PROTECTING BUILDINGS.

CONCLUSION

Cooling towers are critical public health infrastructure. They should be maintained like it.

The 2026 Manhattan cluster, the 2025 outbreaks in Harlem and Central Florida, and two decades of rising national incidence all point to the same conclusion. Routine inspection, preventive maintenance, proper water treatment, operator education, documentation, and mechanical expertise are not optional extras. They protect people, they protect facilities, and they protect communities.

In South Florida, where the climate keeps cooling tower water in the Legionella growth band every month of the year, the standard of care is higher and the margin for neglect is smaller. Maintenance discipline is the one variable a building owner fully controls.

ABC Mechanical is committed to helping facility owners maintain safer buildings through industry-leading cooling tower inspections, preventive maintenance, mechanical expertise, and facility education.

— TAKE THE NEXT STEP

Schedule a Cooling Tower Health Assessment.

A structured inspection and condition assessment of your cooling tower systems, with documented findings and a preventive maintenance plan aligned to ASHRAE 188 and CDC guidance.

Call (877) 824-9888 →

Request the assessment

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REFERENCES

AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES

— SOURCES AND REFERENCES

Every figure in this publication is sourced.

Primary and authoritative sources are numbered. Secondary reporting and aggregated data are lettered and identified as such. Modeled estimates are labeled at the point of use and are not presented as reported figures.

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- b **Central Florida 2025 reporting**. Orange County outbreak of approximately 95–100 cases and Orlando federal courthouse Legionella detection: WFTV, Central Florida Public Media, and ABC News, December 2025.
- c **Industry compliance sources**. Framing of outbreak liability as documentation and accountability failures, and insurer demand for Water Management Programs: cooling tower compliance industry guidance, 2026.

This publication is provided for educational and informational purposes. It does not constitute legal, medical, or engineering advice for any specific facility, and it does not guarantee prevention of Legionella growth or Legionnaires' disease, which depend on factors beyond any single provider's control. Building owners should develop a site-specific Water Management Program with qualified professionals and comply with all applicable regulations. Clinical and epidemiological statements reflect CDC and public health guidance current as of publication.



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