

From: [EHS JHSC](#)
Subject: March JHSC Newsletter
Date: March 17, 2021 4:58:00 PM
Attachments: [Workplace-Violence-Risk-Assessment.pdf](#)
[Potable Water - Maintenance Program \(10 March 2021\).pdf](#)
[image003.png](#)

Apologies for cross-posting

Dear JHSC Members,

We would like to take the opportunity to discuss a few items,

1. Reminder re: COVID-19 and the Role of the JHSCs

During this highly complex crisis situation, the JHSCs have been and will continue to be an integral part of the Internal Responsibility System (IRS). JHSCs continue working together on health and safety concerns. JHSC meetings and inspections have occurred throughout the crisis. The University and EHS continue to provide JHSCs with ongoing support. We encourage these activities to keep occurring, in keeping with the JHSCs' responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

We greatly appreciate that JHSCs have been active and engaged, and we value your ongoing cooperation in working towards achieving our common aim of having a safe and healthy return to our onsite workspaces.

In consideration of the important role of JHSCs, we have already provided all JHSCs with a copy of the University's COVID-19 General Workplace Guideline (GWG), which is being used by University leadership to develop operational plans at a local level for returning to work onsite at the University. You may access the most updated version of the GWG and General Assessment Tool (GAT). While drafting, reviewing and approval of institutional guidelines is an employer responsibility, we encourage the JHSCs to read the document and welcome you to engage with management through your usual channels on any queries or recommendations you may have with respect to the application of the Guideline to worksites within your JHSC's jurisdiction. We are providing this document for the information of JHSCs and ask that you do not forward the document to anyone else.

If you have any questions related to JHSC matters such as inspections, meetings etc. please contact the JHSC manager, Irene Tang at ehs.jhsc@utoronto.ca.

We want to assure you that the health and safety of all University staff is a top priority and all planning is being done in close consultation and with, approval of, experts in Environmental Health and Safety who are in turn in close contact with Provincial public health authorities.

For more information please go to: <https://ehs.utoronto.ca/covid-19-information/>

2. Return to work (re-entry procedures) and Water Maintenance Program

The University has been operating under various restrictions throughout the pandemic and continues to demonstrate our flexibility and ability to operate within these restrictions. As always, the University remains committed to taking all reasonable measures to help protect the health and well-being of its community. Our existing infection control measures and COVID-19 response plans are regularly updated and compliant with the measures recently announced by Toronto Public Health, Peel Public Health and the Province. For more information regarding return-to-work processes, please review the HR&E webpage: <https://hrandequity.utoronto.ca/covid-19/>.

In addition, due to COVID-19, the University has undergone a period of highly varied rates of occupancy across our campuses and buildings. As part of our standard re-entry procedures, the University implements robust building maintenance measures to assess all our buildings and to prepare for increased occupancy. This includes assessing the operations of the water distribution system in accordance with the University's Water Maintenance Program (attached).

Lack of building occupancy resulted in parts of the domestic water distribution system being left unused for upwards of several consecutive months. For buildings that were being reopened following closure, the University proactively implemented its Water Maintenance Program, which uses an algorithm to prioritize buildings across the campuses for assessment of the water system. The Water Maintenance Program looks at a variety of factors relating to the operations of the water system. The University's Water Maintenance Program exceeds the requirements of Ontario Public Health in terms of when testing needs to be performed (e.g., Ontario Public Health does not set a threshold for testing water systems after a certain length of a building being unused or having low occupancy). The remediation and testing methodologies set out in the University's Water Maintenance Program are in line with Ontario Public Health guidance as well as the Federal Public Works guidance for Canadian government buildings.

In some cases, the initial maintenance testing detected the bacteria legionella at a level that required remediation and follow up testing.

After *Legionella* grows and multiplies in a building water system, water containing *Legionella* then has to spread in droplets small enough for people to breathe in to be a risk; therefore, presence of legionella in the water is not a material risk to the general occupant as only the aerosolization of water precipitates disease transmission.

The highest rate of aerosolization of domestic water occurs at showers and spray heads on taps, such as a vegetable washer or equivalent. In order to develop the disease of Legionellosis not only would a person need to be exposed to aerosolized water containing a material amount of legionella bacteria, but also the exposed person would need to be a member of a susceptible population.

Although the presence of legionella is not a material risk to building occupants, once levels of legionella were identified in buildings, the University applied our Water Maintenance Program procedures by prioritizing testing in buildings that had no or very low occupancy during the pandemic.

Where legionella is detected in water, the level of bacteria is categorized as green, orange or red as per our attached Potable Water - Maintenance Program. The vast majority of tests have indicated a "green" result. In a few cases, the level of legionella bacteria fell outside of the "green range". Appropriate remediation was undertaken immediately, with re-testing until a "green" result was obtained as per our attached program procedures. The University will conduct ongoing surveillance to ensure low occupancy buildings are monitored as needed.

The JHSCs have been provided reports regarding legionella testing results once the reports are completed, though UofT generally does not provide updates on or information about regular building maintenance.

We would like to encourage the JHSCs to review the attached University of Toronto Facilities and Services, Water Maintenance Program (Potable Water), which includes our testing approach for

legionella. If you have any feedback on this Program, please let us know.

We understand the JHSC may be interested in attending legionella testing in their relevant buildings. The University is prepared to provide the JHSCs with the testing schedule for buildings within their jurisdictions. If you are interested, please contact us so we may provide you with specific details regarding legionella testing schedules for your buildings if applicable.

JHSCs are asked to notify EHS in advance if they are sending a member to attend testing.

Given that the legionella findings have arisen from COVID-related building closures, and at a time when the University is actively engaged in reopening activities as permitted by our local public health authorities, and in view of our awareness that our community has heightened health and safety concerns in these circumstances, the University is providing JHSCs with more information and more access to be involved in legionella water testing than would generally be provided.

If you have any questions, comments please contact the JHSC manager, Irene Tang at ehs.jhsc@utoronto.ca.

3. Workplace violence risk assessment

The University has prepared a written, University-wide risk assessment formalizing its assessment of the risks of workplace violence and mitigation strategies for identified risks. The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) requires the University to assess the risks of workplace violence that may arise from the nature of the workplace, the type of work or the conditions of work. The university is required to reassess the risks of workplace violence as often as is necessary to ensure its [Governing Council Policy with Respect to Workplace Violence](#) and related [Workplace Violence Program](#) continue to protect workers from workplace violence. If the risk assessment is in writing, it must also be provided to the JHSCs.

The University has over the years used a variety of means of assessing and mitigating risks of workplace violence. In order to formalize the University-wide risk assessment, OHS has conducted a review of all job categories/titles in order to develop a General University Workplace Violence Assessment for all positions across the University in University owned/operated workplaces. This assessment is intended to be at a high level, describing potential risks, and measures and procedures to mitigate those risks, that are broadly applicable. Divisions will continue assessing and implementing local measures where applicable. Employees are encouraged to discuss any specific workplace considerations with their supervisors.

JHSCs are encouraged to review the attached assessment. If you have any questions or comments please contact Irene Tang, JHSC Manager at ehs.jhsc@utoronto.ca.

4. Safety Training

The University offers numerous training courses for its employees, specific to their workplace context ([Administration/Facilities](#) & [Lab Environments](#)). The University updates training courses on an ongoing basis. We encourage the JHSCs to review our training offerings relevant to their specific work and welcome the JHSCs to provide us with any feedback regarding training content.

If you have any questions regarding relevant training required for your specific work, please speak with your supervisor. If you have any questions regarding EHS-offered training courses and related University-developed training content please contact Irene Tang, JHSC Manager at

ehs.jhsc@utoronto.ca.

5. Updated Policies

[Policy with Respect to Workplace Harassment](#), [Policy with Respect to Workplace Violence](#) and [Health and Safety Policy](#) has been updated. Please see link and update area health and safety boards as required.

6. Listserv for JHSC members

If you have not subscribed to the listserv yet, please follow the instructions below.

1. Please send an email with your UTORONTO.CA email to listserv@listserv.utoronto.ca.
2. In the body of the email please paste: **sub EHSJHSC-I firstname lastname**. Please replace **firstname lastname** with your first and last name. Leave the Subject Blank.



7. JHSC Minutes & Inspection Reports

If you have not uploaded all JHSC minutes/inspections reports to date, please do so immediately. Minutes and inspection reports are to be uploaded to the “[My JHSC Module](#)”. A list of [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) is also available on this webpage, including a “[My JHSC Module Presentation](#)”.

If you experience problems with the module, please contact EHS JHSC (ehs.jhsc@utoronto.ca).

8. USW Email Address

As per USW’s collective agreement, all JHSC minutes, inspections and testing reports are required to be forwarded to them. Please forward those items to: healthandsafety@usw1998.ca.

9. Health and Safety Boards

Please review your local JHSC/H&S bulletin boards to ensure that postings required by the Ministry of Labour are present. A [list of required postings](#) (and links for download) is available from the EHS website.

Please note: EHS conducts annual audits of safety boards on our campuses. The JHSCs are responsible for posting minutes and applicable reports. Please inform EHS when new boards have been installed.

Please feel free to connect with [Irene Tang](#), JHSC Manager, as always, anytime should you have questions or concerns.

Thank you,
Irene

Irene Tang

JHSC Manager, EHS

Division of the Vice-President, Research & Innovation

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[@researchUofT](#) | research.utoronto.ca

The University of Toronto is open, but due to COVID-19, staff in EHS are working remotely to support operations as effectively as possible. Note that staff are not available to accept mail or courier deliveries. Please send items digitally or contact me to make alternative arrangements.

[U of T COVID-19 Information](#)

[Research and Innovation COVID-19 Information](#)

If you are attending a planned meeting and require accommodation(s) due to disability, please email me directly and I will work with you to make appropriate arrangements.

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