THE CLEANING OF WATER TANKS, PROCESSING MACHINERY AND ASSOCIATED WATER AND DRAINAGE SYSTEMS IN A LAUNDRY

RISK ASSESSMENT AND METHOD STATEMENT (RAMS)

Issue 1
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METHOD STATEMENT

The removal of soil, scale and general process water and effluent residues must be undertaken to ensure the hygienic quality of laundered textiles and safe working conditions for Laundry operatives. Routine physio-chemical procedures should be practised to control these conditions in storage tanks, washing machines, continuous tunnel washer systems and water distribution and drainage systems.

Such procedures should be undertaken in accordance with this generic method statement and the associated risk assessment which must be designed specifically for the task in hand.

The cleaning involves a comprehensive and meticulous process to ensure that tanks, machines and associated water and drainage systems are free from contaminants and safe for close proximity or use. The contamination of textiles and the personal hazards to staff from contact, inhalation or consumption of contaminated water or air-borne droplets must be prevented at all times. The frequency of cleaning and the procedures for reducing the risks are documented in the generic risk assessment which should be used as a model for the specific risk assessing all situations and cleaning procedures.

The procedure(s) will include several critical steps:

Risk assessing the procedure: determine all potential hazards, paying special attention to PPE requirements, slip/trip/fall hazards and the loan working and confined space regulations/guidelines.

Draining the Tank or Machine: The first step involves draining completely to remove all stored water and thus allowing for thorough inspection and cleaning of the interior surfaces.

Physical Cleaning: Once drained, physical cleaning involves the removal of sludge, scale, and biofilm deposits. Specialised equipment and techniques may be required to scrub all surfaces, effectively removing any deposits that could harbour bacteria and other harmful microorganisms. Disposal of such liquid or solid deposits should be undertaken responsibly.

Disinfection: After physically cleaning, disinfection using an appropriate biocide, e.g., chlorine, is crucial to eliminate any remaining bacteria, viruses, or other pathogens which are obviously not visible. The disinfectant should be applied uniformly and given necessary time to ensure that all surfaces within the tank are adequately treated.

Rinsing: Following disinfection, thorough flushing of any remaining deposits and rinsing to remove any residual disinfectant is critical to ensure that the water stored in the tank after cleaning is safe for use.

Refilling and Testing: Refilling the tank or re-commissioning the machine will require water samples to be taken at various stages and analysed to ensure that the cleaning and disinfection process has been effective, and the water meets all safety and quality standards.

THE HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK ACT, THE CONTROL OF SUBSTANCES HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH (COSHH) AND THE CONTROL OF LEGIONELLA IN WATER SYSTEMS ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DUTY HOLDER

Water tank cleaning is essential for several reasons, primarily related to health, safety, and compliance with regulations.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA) mandates that employers and those in control of premises ensure the health and safety of their employees and others who may be affected by their activities. Regular cleaning of water tanks is a critical component of meeting this duty of care.

Additionally, the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) requires employers to control substances that are hazardous to health, which includes biological agents such as Legionella bacteria. Proper water tank maintenance is a necessary control measure to eliminate the risk to health from such hazards.

The HSE Approved Code of Practice L8 (ACoP L8) provides practical guidance for controlling Legionella bacteria in water systems. It outlines the responsibilities of duty holders and specifies risk assessments, method statements and control measures, including the regular cleaning and disinfection of water tanks.

Bacteria thrive in stagnant or poorly maintained water systems, posing a significant health risk such as Legionnaires' disease. Regular cleaning and disinfection of water storage and distribution systems prevents the growth and spread of bacteria, ensuring a safe water supply. Besides Legionella, other harmful microorganisms can inhabit water tanks, leading to various waterborne diseases. Regular cleaning ensures these pathogens are effectively removed, safeguarding public health.

Failure to comply with water hygiene regulations can lead to severe legal repercussions, including fines, lawsuits, and damage to reputation. By adhering to mandated cleaning schedules and standards, businesses and institutions can avoid these legal issues. Regulatory bodies conduct inspections to ensure compliance with health and safety standards. Regular water tank cleaning helps in passing these inspections, avoiding penalties and enforcement actions.

Contaminants like sludge, scale, and biofilm can cause blockages, corrosion, and other issues that impair the efficiency and lifespan of water systems. Regular cleaning prevents these problems, ensuring smooth operation. Preventative maintenance through regular cleaning is more cost-effective than dealing with emergency repairs and system failures. It reduces downtime and extends the life of water infrastructure.

In summary, water tank cleaning is not just a regulatory requirement but a crucial practice for maintaining water quality, ensuring safety, preventing disease outbreaks, and avoiding legal and operational issues.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Date:	
Location:	
Section & Machine Type/No.:	
Completed By:	
Manager Signature:	
Date Of Re-Assessment:	

Precautions and procedures for operating, cleaning and maintaining laundry machinery and water systems contaminated with laundry process residues/biofilm.

SCORES AND RISK RATING CALCULATION

PROBABILITY	SEVERITY	RISK RATING
1 = Highly remote 2 = Possible but unlikely occurrence 3 = Fair chance of occurrence 4 = Highly likely / Regular occurrence 5 = Common occurrence	1 = Trivial injury 2 = Minor injury / First aid required 3 = Moderate injury / Absence from work (1-3 days) 4 = Severe injury / RIDDOR report 5 = Fatality / Permanent disability	1-4 = Low Priority 5-9 = Medium Priority 10-25 = High Priority

There is a risk that laundry process liquor residues may classify as Biofilm and thus present a hazard to human health. Similar precautions to those identified for water tank cleaning in the Legionella risk assessment ACoP L8 should be referenced for this procedure. Tank cleaning may often be a large exercise such as to demand sub-contracting to experts; sample contractor and link. https://legionellarisks.co.uk/

KEY STEPS	HAZARDS	INITIAL SCORE RATING	INITIAL RISK RATING	PREVENTATIVE ACTION TO REDUCE RISK	SCORE RATING	RISK RATING	BY WHOM	BY WHEN
Identify components or areas where residues are known to accumulate.	Desk-top evaluation	0	0	Seek expert advice from manufacturer	0	0	ANO	TBA
Determine the procedure, tools and agents needed to undertake cleaning	Adopt known procedure and apply to the following key steps (column 1)							

To prevent skin contact, inhalation and consumption, specify the required PPE clothing along with eye protection, e.g., gloves, coverall, FFP3 to EN149 face mask, goggles	Fire, inhalation of smoke, particles, atomised water droplets, chemical burns	4 x 2	8	All actions as defined in column 1 (Key Steps) are necessary. Follow these steps carefully and take due regard for the safety of others at all times.	2 x 1	2		
Implement all relevant safe practices for this procedure and refer to the CTW CoP								
Prepare suitable receptacle for collecting waste matter								
Combustion, pressure jetting or chemical treatment may be required								
Prepare necessary drainage facilities								
Where possible, relocate machine parts to open air and foul sewer drain or catchment area for cleaning								
Rinse components with fresh water								
Dispose of Biofilm residue (contaminated goods) safely and responsibly								
Apply surface treatment to machine components where specified, e.g., chemical, paint, etc.								
Return machine to normal use and operate disinfection cycle where specified.								
Remove all PPE and discard or clean as appropriate.								