



May 2020

WATERCOOLERS – HYGIENE AND SAFETY

Drinking water from watercoolers is one of the best, sustainable and most convenient ways of providing healthy, safe and hygienic hydration. Healthy hydration helps mental well-being and improves physical performance. In most EU Countries employers are required by law to provide a source of drinking water for their employees.

Watercoolers provide water safely and hygienically by following the Watercoolers Europe (WE) Guidelines for Good Hygiene Practice. These Guidelines are intended to ensure that the highest standards are reached in the fields of quality, safety and hygiene. They have been approved by all EU Member States and notified in the EU Register of Food Safety.(1)

WATERCOOLERS and Covid-19

EFSA's (European Food Safety Authority) chief scientist, Marta Hugas, said: "Experiences from previous outbreaks of related coronaviruses, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), show that transmission through food consumption did not occur. At the moment, there is no evidence to suggest that coronavirus is any different in this respect."(2)

According to WHO (World Health Organisation) and **UNICEF** (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund): "Currently, there is no evidence on the survival of Covid-19 virus in drinking water."

As the leading European Association in the hydration sector via watercoolers, WE has a responsibility to advise Association Members and their customers of the safe use of watercoolers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESTART of WATERCOOLERS after temporary shutdown of premises

Customers should be assured that leaving coolers unused for a period is likely only to create quality and not safety issues.

After a Shutdown period: Just before re-use:

- Bottled watercoolers: Remove the bottle, drain the cooler through the taps, fit a new bottle and flush 2L water through both taps. Sanitise taps and dispensing area with food-safe sanitiser spray wipes
- Mains-fed watercoolers: Flush approx. 5L water through both taps. Sanitise taps and dispensing area with food-safe sanitiser spray wipes
- Hot water dispensers: Switch the dispenser back on and allow it to reach temperature. Once up to temperature, drain the tank and allow to re-fill

Further Advice

An additional sanitisation should be performed at all locations with strict hygienic requirements as a precaution.

Customers are advised to:

- Add additional regular in-house sanitisations of watercooler points using sanitisation wipes or spray
- Practice good personal hygiene by washing hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- Regularly wipe-down often-touched surfaces with alcohol wipes
- Avoid attending work if they feel unwell
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth if their hands are not clean
- Avoid large gatherings within the work-space
- Practice social-distancing – ensure there is at least 2 metres between them and other people