



LOSS CONTROL BULLETIN



Another loss prevention service from Bollinger, Inc.

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PREVENTING BACTERIA IN WATER COOLERS

#118

Each year, clubs across the country incur general liability claims from patrons who become ill from drinking contaminated water on the course. The source of the contamination is usually bacteria growing inside and outside of water coolers.

Many times course workers in charge of refilling water coolers do not empty existing water before adding fresh water. The result is diluted chlorine levels inside the cooler. Over time, bacteria will begin to grow and contaminate the water. Once the bacteria begin to grow, simply adding fresh water each day will not eliminate exposure.

The Problem Area

When chlorine levels are low, bacteria will usually start to grow on the spigot outside the cooler because it is exposed to sunlight and stays relatively moist. Once this happens, fresh water coming through the spigot becomes contaminated water.

Risk Management Controls

The good news; it is quite simple to eliminate the bacteria and ensure it doesn't return. Management should develop and implement a policy of emptying existing water in coolers before adding fresh water. Also, a procedure should be developed and implemented requiring employees to disinfect coolers daily during hot summer months. Finally, employees should be performing visual inspections of the spigot to ensure bacteria are **not forming**.

Disinfecting: To be sure bacteria does not develop or to kill existing bacteria, mix a solution of 10% chlorine or household bleach with 90% water and fill spray bottles with the solution. Next, implement the following procedure:

- Empty the remaining water in the cooler
- Spray the inside of the cooler and the outside spigot with the solution
- Allow the solution to act for at least **1** minute
- Thoroughly rinse the cooler
- Refill the cooler with fresh water

Spraying the solution will not leave an overly bad taste or smell. Nevertheless, the cooler should be properly rinsed before adding fresh water.



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