

## LEGIONELLOSIS - USA (DELAWARE)

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<<http://www.delawareonline.com/newsjournal/local/2003/07/11legionnairesisf.html>>

12 cases of Legionnaires' disease, a potentially fatal bacterial disease with pneumonia-like symptoms, have been reported in Delaware since 29 May 2003, health officials said. 2 people died from the disease.

Dr. Maureen Dempsey, director of the Delaware Division of Public Health, said the cases do not appear to be related and there is no public health risk. But health officials will continue to investigate whether there is any connection because of the number of cases reported in a short time period, she said.

"There are no common denominators between any of the infections that leads us to believe there is an outbreak," Dempsey said. "There is no cluster of cases, no common source, or related factors." 7 of the 12 cases were reported in New Castle County, and 2 were in Sussex. 3 cases involved non-residents who received care in Delaware.

The range for Legionnaires' cases in the state is 16 to 22 in any given year, Dempsey said. There was an average 13.8 cases per year in Delaware between 1995 and 2002, she said.

The disease is not spread through person-to-person contact. It is [usually - Mod.LL] contracted by inhaling mists from an infected water source, such as cooling towers and evaporative condensers of large air-conditioning systems, whirlpool spas and showers, according to the state Department of Health and Social Services. People may be exposed to these mists in homes, workplaces, hospitals, or public places. The disease can be treated with antibiotics.

The southern Atlantic region has shown an increase in Legionnaires' cases so far this year, with 161 reported cases, up from 89 in 2002, Dempsey said. The region includes Delaware, Washington, D.C., Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. She could not explain the increase in cases and said the cases were isolated.

There were 549 reported cases in the United States for the week ending 28 Jun 2003. That number is up from 416 at the same time last year, state health officials said.

About 8000 to 18 000 people get Legionnaires' disease in the United States each year, and 5 percent to 15 percent die from it, Dempsey said. The disease is most common

among middle-age and older people, especially those who smoke or have chronic lung disease.

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[The warmer months of the year provide more opportunities for *L. pneumophila* to spread to humans. Although the posting implies that no epidemiological association exists among these cases, such a link may be difficult to find. Analysis of the strains (if available) by molecular typing could determine whether they were identical. - Mod.LL]