

LEGIONELLOSIS - USA (SOUTH DAKOTA)

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Legionnaire's warning issued after 8th case

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The discovery last week [3rd week August 2005] of an 8th case of Legionnaire's disease in Rapid City prompted South Dakota health officials to alert every state health department in the nation.

The discovery came only a few days after an estimated 500 000 motorcyclists attended the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. Lisa Weyer, director of the Sturgis Rally Department, said this year's [2005] rally took place without them knowing anything about the Rapid City outbreak.

The 1st Rapid City case was in May 2005. The 1st time most South Dakotans heard about the outbreak was in early August 2005. Doneen Hollingsworth, state Health department secretary, said South Dakota's public health officials decide on a case-by-case basis how to proceed in case of an outbreak. She said the disease is not contagious, and there's nothing people can do to prevent it.

Officials say 8 Rapid City residents -- 3 women and 5 men, ages 51 to 85 -- have been diagnosed with Legionnaire's disease this summer [2005]. Lon Kightlinger, state epidemiologist, said the victims fit the disease profile. Some are smokers, and some have underlying health conditions, he said.

South Dakota's earlier decision not to issue a public alert is similar to what several neighboring states say they would have done and is in line with policies of CDC. Jennifer Marcone, a CDC spokeswoman, said there are no firm national guidelines concerning public notification. She said South Dakota health officials did a thorough case control study, and no definitive source of the disease was found.

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[With the meeting of half a million bikers in Rapid City, cases may be diagnosed from the cluster in other states. - Mod.LL]