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# Disease-causing bacteria found, cleared from UC ventilation system

**By: Elaine Hardenstine and Julie Stewart**

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A contracted University Center employee was diagnosed with Legionnaire's disease, a form of pneumonia that is caused by Legionella bacteria, according to a campus-wide e-mail sent to students Saturday.

Although the lung infection should not be taken lightly, no serious risk to students exists, said Dr. Barb Plohock, director of Environmental Health and Safety, because the infection is spread through airborne bacteria - not from person to person.

Plohock said the case appears to be isolated, and it is highly unlikely another case will develop.

Upon recognition of the problem, numerous tests were run to identify the source of the bacteria, which was the exterior HVAC units that serve the U.C.

"The entire heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system was immediately shut down, and the system has been treated following recommended protocols," the e-mail read. "Remediation has been successfully completed and there is no further risk of exposure."

Legionella bacteria tests of the U.C.'s water came back negative, according to the e-mail.

The U.C. will remain open.

Jennifer Tucker, assistant vice president of communications, said the university took action to have the equipment tested Saturday after getting word from the worker's family that they suspected he had the disease.

The system was immediately shut down and disinfected, and no other areas of the U.C. were affected.

No areas of the U.C. were shut down while the ventilation system was tested and cleaned, and the units are back up and running, she said.

Tucker said the worker's condition is improving.

Tucker reiterated that the university is confident that this is an isolated case.

"It's very unlikely, highly unlikely, that anyone would be affected," she said.

The e-mail advised that students with cough and fever are more likely to have H1N1 flu than Legionnaire's disease and should continue to self-isolate and self-treat.