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Fifth case of Legionnaires' confirmed

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November 16, 2009

BY BETH KRAMER ekramer@scn1.com

VERNON HILLS -- An Illinois public health official confirmed a fifth case of Legionnaires' disease at The Park at Vernon Hills, a retirement community.

"We can now confirm five cases of Legionnaires' as of (Saturday), but the onset of illness was in early October, so this isn't a new illness. This is just now being reported to us," said Kelly Jakubek, Illinois Department of Public Health spokeswoman.

Two of the cases were associated with the deaths of two residents of The Park at Vernon Hills, both of whom also had underlying medical conditions, according to Lake County Health Department spokeswoman Leslie Piotrowski. One resident died in September and the other in early November.

"IDPH is working closely with the facility to investigate, but at this point we aren't able to confirm the source," Jakubek said Sunday.

Legionnaires' disease is a bacterial pneumonia spread through water vapor. IDPH collected water samples Nov. 7 for testing. Results should be available in about a week.

So far, the outbreak is limited to The Park, Piotrowski said. The Lake County Health Department, IDPH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are investigating all sources of water at The Park.

In addition, The Park has hired an independent contractor to investigate, according to The Park's executive director, Jane Woloson.

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