

Legionnaire's Disease tracked here local source

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Members of the Flathead City-County Board of Health learned Thursday that the Centers for Disease Control has linked two out-of-state cases of Legionnaire's Disease to a Flathead Valley lodging business.

Jody White, director of Community Health Services, did not disclose the name of the lodging place under investigation as the source of the potentially deadly bacterial infection.

White said the business was discovered as the common link between two patients in different states who acquired the disease after visiting here.

A lung infection, Legionnaire's Disease has symptoms like other forms of pneumonia including high fever, chills and a cough and sometimes muscle aches and headaches. They appear two to 14 days after exposure to the bacteria.

County Health Officer Joe Russell said the bacteria called Legionella is now found throughout the country.

"It's something new for us," he said. "The challenge with Legionella is that it is a very ubiquitous bacteria."

Russell said it usually is associated with water such as in a fountain or air cooler.

The department's epidemiology response team including the Environmental Health division is involved in the investigation.

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