

LEGIONELLOSIS - USA (08): (VIRGIN ISLANDS) HOTELS

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A ProMED-mail post <<http://www.promedmail.org>>

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Source: Virgin Islands Daily News [edited] <<http://virginislandsdailynews.com/news/cdc-ties-five-cases-of-legionnaire-s-disease-to-frenchman-s-reef-and-frenchman-s-cove-1.1244214#axzz1gTPMgRhY>>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] has linked 5 past cases of Legionnaires' disease -- reported between March 2010 and August 2011 -- with stays at Marriott's Frenchman's Reef and Morning Star Beach Resort and Marriott's Frenchman's Cove [in Saint Thomas], prompting remediation work to the resorts' water systems. The VI [Virgin Islands] Health Department has been "working closely" with a team of CDC specialists to monitor the remediation efforts at the resorts, after an investigation into the 5 past cases, according to a statement the Health Department released Monday [12 Dec 2012].

The illness was found in stateside residents who had been guests at the resorts, said Health Department spokeswoman Eunice Bedminster. They required hospitalization but have since recovered, she said. There have been no reports of employees affected at either site, according to the Health Department statement.

The statement indicates that Frenchman's Reef and Morningstar Beach Resort has hired a consultant who led a cleaning project of the affected areas and treated the water system. Test results show no existence of Legionella bacteria, although the Health Department statement said the test results have not yet been evaluated independently by the CDC.

The Health [Department] had asked the resorts to notify those who could potentially be affected by the bacteria: guests and employees, Bedminster said. The properties asked for an extension on a deadline that had been set, and it was granted, but the deadlines passed last week [week of 5 Dec 2011] without the notification to guests and employees going out, Bedminster said. She did not know if, after the deadline, the properties had made the requested notifications, she said.

The hotel provided The Daily News with a written statement that did not address guest notification: "Marriott takes hotel hygiene and cleanliness very seriously. As soon as we were notified of the possibility of the presence of Legionella bacteria we immediately began to work with the USVI Department of Health (DOH) to address the situation. The Frenchman's Reef and Morning Star Beach Resorts hired a consultant who led a cleaning project of affected areas and the treatment of the water system. The latest test results taken after the implementation of these measures show no existence of Legionella bacteria in the samples tested. We have complied with the recommendations provided by the DOH, and we have successfully addressed the issue at the resort. The DOH has allowed the hotel to remain fully open for business and welcome our guests."

The Daily News spoke with Marriott Frenchman's Reef and Morning Star Beach Resort General Manager Jose Gonzalez Espinosa by phone and asked for comment on the Health Department's assertion that the resort did not make the notifications it was supposed to make by the deadline. Gonzalez would not answer the questions unless they were in writing.

The Daily News has a policy against submitting questions in writing because written Q and A stifles and slows follow-up and response. The resort underwent a major renovation during the summer, closing 3 May 2011 and reopening on 6 Oct 2011.

Legionnaires' disease is a pneumonia caused by the *Legionella* bacteria, which live in warm water supplies, said Dr Lauri Hicks, a medical epidemiologist with the CDC. The bacteria that cause the disease do not pass from person to person. "It really requires exposure to water aerosol that contains *Legionella*," she said, Exposure may occur from showering or with time spent in a whirlpool or hot tub where the bacteria that lead to Legionnaires' disease are present, Hicks said.

Only a fraction of people -- typically those with certain risk factors, such as compromised immune systems -- exposed to the bacteria become ill, she said.

According to the Health Department statement, from 2000 through 2009, a total of 22 418 cases of legionellosis were reported to CDC from the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The CDC informed the Health Department in October [2011] of the 5 Legionnaires' disease cases among past guests at the resorts, and the Health Department asked for the agency's help in investigating. From 18 to 22 Oct 2011, CDC specialists conducted testing, and the properties were alerted about the possible *Legionella* contamination, Bedminster said. On 3 Nov 2011, the Health Department notified each property of the CDC's conclusive findings and ordered them to immediately work on their water systems, including cleansing, superheating, chlorinating, and hiring a private consultant experienced in eliminating *Legionella* from building water systems, according to the release. More than 6 weeks later, the Health Department notified the public with the statement it released Monday [12 Dec 2011].

Bedminster said that there had been no delay -- and that remediation work began immediately. "We have worked in good faith with both the resorts during what I have said was a monitoring process. We had some agreed-upon deadlines that had not been met, so we had to let the public know," she said.

Bedminster said that Health Department officials had discussed the possibility of enforcement actions with the Department of Labor and the Department of Planning and Natural Resources to get those deadlines met, but she did not know the outcome of the discussions. "Safeguarding the public's health, including that of employees and guests, from exposure and threats are of the utmost importance to the Department of Health," acting Health Commissioner Mercedes Dullum said in the prepared statement. "DOH will continue to monitor this situation with assistance from the CDC. People should not be discouraged from traveling to or within the US Virgin Islands."

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[The following has been extracted from the US CDC document Travel-Associated Legionnaires' Disease (<<http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/faq.htm>>):

"About 20-25 percent of all Legionnaires' disease reported to CDC is travel-associated. Legionnaires' disease is important to diagnose and to report because its identification implies the presence of an environmental source to which other susceptible individuals are likely to be exposed. Clusters of Legionnaires' disease associated with travel to hotels or aboard cruise ships are rarely detected by individual clinicians or health departments; travelers typically disperse from the source of infection

before developing symptoms. Therefore, a travel history should be actively sought from patients with community-acquired pneumonia and *Legionella* testing should be performed for those who have traveled in the 2 weeks before onset of symptoms.

"\_Because of the multi-state nature of travel in the US, national-level surveillance is necessary to detect outbreaks of travel-associated Legionnaires' disease. CDC relies upon state and local health departments to conduct this surveillance. Surveillance through the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS) is still important for monitoring national trends; all cases should be reported through NNDSS."

"Because of the public health importance of timely reporting, inform CDC of travel-associated cases by emailing about the patient's movements in the 2-10 days before onset."

"Environmental sampling/testing should only be conducted after careful consideration of the epidemiologic evidence linking a case(s) to a particular location."

The following article is linked to the CDC document: Barbaree JM, et al: Protocol for Sampling Environmental Sites for Legionellae. *Applied Environmental Microbiol* 1987; 53(7): 1454-8 (<[http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/files/sampling\\_protocol1987.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/files/sampling_protocol1987.pdf)>): "Since legionellae not related to disease may be found in many of the sites sampled, an epidemiologic association with the probable source should be established before intervention methods, such as disinfection, are undertaken."

"Random sampling without an epidemiologic evaluation and comparing isolates from the environment and from patients could lead to false conclusions about sources of epidemic strains."

Potential environmental sampling sites for *Legionella* spp that the CDC document suggests include: internal surfaces of faucets, aerators, and shower heads; and water from incoming water main, holding tanks and cisterns, water heater tanks, decorative fountains, irrigation equipment, fire sprinkler system (if recently used), whirlpools, and spas. Because *Legionella* may be found in water supplies without linkage to any cases, the actual causative source should be demonstrated by matching the genotype of the environmental isolates with that of any clinical isolates to assure frequently costly corrective measures are carried out on the actual source (<<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC86783/>>; and <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2730281/>>).

The Virgin Islands are located in the Leeward Islands of the Lesser Antilles, which form the border between the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. Politically, the eastern islands form the British Virgin Islands and the western ones form the United States Virgin Islands. The US Virgin Islands consist of the main islands of Saint Croix, Saint John, and Saint Thomas (<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_Virgin\\_Islands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Virgin_Islands)>). They can be seen on the HealthMap/ProMED-mail interactive map at <<http://healthmap.org/r/1xng>>. - Mod.ML]

[see also:

Legionellosis - UK ex Greece (02): travelers, RFI 20111015.3093 Legionellosis - USA (04): (MD) fatal, hotel 20111014.3073 Legionellosis - UK ex Greece, travelers, alert 20111008.3021 Legionellosis - Italy (04): (VR) travelers, Eurosurveillance report 20111008.3020 Legionellosis - Italy (03): (VR) travelers, background 20110915.2821 Legionellosis - Italy (02): (VR) travelers 20110915.2817 Legionellosis - Italy: (VR) travelers 20110914.2802 Legionellosis - USA (03): (NV) hotel 20110716.2159 Legionellosis, hotel - UK (03): (Scotland) 20110408.1100 Legionellosis, hotel -

UK (02): (Scotland) background 20110328.0974 Legionellosis, hotel - UK: (Scotland) 20110327.0965  
Legionellosis - USA (02): (CA) conference, susp 20110304.0713 Legionellosis - USA: (CA) conference, susp  
20110214.0494 Legionellosis, hotel - Mexico: (QR) alert 20110121.0253 Legionellosis - Australia (02): ex  
Indonesia (Bali) alert 20110119.0226

Legionellosis - Australia: (WA, VI) ex Indonesia (Bali) 20110115.0173  
2010

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Legionellosis - Australia: (WA) ex Indonesia (Bali) alert 20100826.3021  
2009

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Legionellosis, fatal, hotel - United Arab Emirates: (Dubai) 20090205.0509  
2007

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Legionellosis, hotel - Scandinavia ex Thailand (Phuket): alert 20070113.0178  
2006

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Legionellosis, tourists - Malaysia 20061027.3064 Legionellosis, craft fair - France (Lorraine)  
20061012.2924 Legionellosis, spa pool - UK (England) 20060929.2787 Legionellosis - Italy (Venice): alert  
20060912.2588  
2005

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Legionellosis, hotel - Sweden (Dalarna): susp. 20050204.0383  
2004

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Legionellosis, fatal 2003 - UK ex India 20040628.1724 Legionellosis - Italy (Basilicata) (02): background  
20040408.0957 Legionellosis - Italy (Basilicata) 20040408.0950  
2002

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Legionellosis, pilgrims - Italy (Puglia) 20020705.4674  
1999

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Legionellosis - UK ex Thailand 19990422.0673 Legionellosis, imported - Thailand 19990320.0442]  
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