



March 10, 2006

TWO CONFIRMED CASES OF LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE STEM FROM STAY AT LOGAN COUNTY MOTEL

Both state and Logan County health departments working to notify guests and correct the problem

LINCOLN – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) issued an order today requiring the Best Western Inn, formerly the Comfort Inn, in Lincoln, to close its swimming pool and whirlpool area. The order was issued after both pools tested positive for the bacterium, which can cause Legionellosis, also known as Legionnaires' disease. The swimming pool and whirlpool spa have been closed for use by guests since Tuesday. IDPH is also ordering the hotel to take corrective action, including draining and cleaning both pools and changing filters.

IDPH and the Logan County Health Department recently learned of two confirmed cases of Legionnaires' disease in out-of-state residents who both stayed at the motel. One person with Legionnaires' disease stayed at the hotel in mid-January and the other in mid-February. Both people were hospitalized and on ventilators. On March 8, IDPH and the Logan County Health Department completed an investigation where staff established there was no chlorine residual in either pool. An independent laboratory reported that water samples collected from the pools tested positive for Legionella species. Additional environmental samples are being analyzed with further results pending.

“Guests who stayed at the hotel are from all over the country. It’s important to get this information out to those guests so they can be properly treated, said Dr. Eric E. Whitaker, IDPH Director. “Legionnaires' disease can be a mild respiratory illness or it can be very serious and can cause death in up to 30 percent of cases. Most cases can be treated successfully with antibiotics, and healthy people usually recover from infection.”

The most common symptoms of Legionellosis are fever, chills and a cough. Some patients also have muscle aches, headaches, tiredness, loss of appetite and, occasionally, diarrhea. Persons with the most severe type of this infection are likely to be hospitalized with pneumonia. Most people contract the disease by inhaling mist or aerosol from a water source contaminated with the bacteria. In some cases, the disease may be transmitted by other ways, such as aspirating contaminated water. All studies to date have shown that person-to-person spread does not occur. If you have reason to believe you were exposed to the bacteria, talk to your doctor or local health department.

Both Best Western Inn and Comfort Inn have provided hotel guest and phone information to IDPH and the Logan County Health Department. The IDPH Health Alert Network has sent a message to more than 800 phone numbers for hotel guests, nationwide, informing them of possible exposure and encouraging them to see their health care provider. To date, more than 200 people have called the phone bank and approximately 30 have said they have experienced symptoms.

IDPH and Logan County Health Department staff will operate the phone bank until 9:00 pm tonight and from 8:00 am until 6:00 pm on Saturday CST.

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