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OC Hotel Closes After Two Vacationers Contract Legionnaires' Disease

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By Brittany Cooper - [email](#)

OCEAN CITY, Md. (WBOC) – Sunfest is the last hurrah for Ocean City businesses, but the parking lot at the Econo Lodge Oceanblock on 145th street is empty.

The hotel decided to close on Sunday after its water supply tested positive for a low level of the Legionella bacteria that causes Legionnaires' disease.

The Worcester County Health department did the testing after two people fell ill with Legionnaires' disease after staying at the hotel in August.

Marty Pusey from the health department said if two people test positive for the disease within a certain period of time, the state health department is notified. Then, they move forward with research and a survey to find if the two people had any common ground. In that instance, she said the local health departments are contacted to do testing.

Econo Lodge manager Sharon Chandler said the hotel staff is taking steps to treat the water supply before opening again in the spring.

The Worcester County Health department says it will continue to test the water until it is given the all-clear.

Some vacationers said the news still makes them a little worried.

Betsy Young and her husband visit Ocean City often in the fall and winter months. She said she was concerned about the Legionella bacteria. "I was a little leery, especially since we are staying right across the street. Hopefully it doesn't go across the street," said Young.

Joan Hardison from Louisville, Kentucky said it was all about using caution when staying away from home. "You just have to be careful. You don't know what's going to sneak up on you the next time," said Hardison.

Kimberly from Baltimore works in healthcare, and said she visited the Econo Lodge during the investigation.

"I stayed there probably 7 or more times, weekends this past summer and I had my girlfriend in from California and I've also brought my children down over the time period and we haven't had any problems at all. Even after receiving the warning we decided to stay and we haven't had any health problems at all," said Kimberly.

She said the hotel informed them of the testing for the bacteria. "Upon check-in they were very nice and said we do need to tell you this and inform you of this information. Statistically speaking there wasn't enough context around what had actually happened with two other people across the country after thousands of people had stayed there, we didn't feel that there was enough risk, and since then, we're fine."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Legionnaires' disease is a form of pneumonia caused by Legionella bacteria that are found naturally in the environment, usually in water. The CDC says people get the disease when they breathe in a mist or vapor containing the bacteria. They are not spread from one person to another person.

The Worcester County Health Department says most people exposed to the bacteria do not actually become sick from it. They say if you have any reason to think you were exposed to Legionella bacteria, talk to your doctor or the health department.

The CDC says the disease causes cough, shortness of breath, fever and muscle aches.

This is not the first time Legionella bacteria has been found in Ocean City. In 2012, two people fell ill with Legionnaires' disease after staying at Sea Watch Condominiums. In 2011, one person died from contracting the disease at the Plim Plaza on Atlantic Avenue in Ocean City.

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