

# Multiple cases of Legionnaires' Disease force action against local hotel

Bob Walters, Rissa Shaw Fri 7:05 PM, Aug 18, 2017

**LACY LAKEVIEW, Texas (KWTX)** Continued health concerns have prompted the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District to issue a control order against a Lacy Lakeview hotel, officials announced Friday.



CDC/MGN

The order was enacted after four cases of Legionnaires' Disease were reported by guests of the Fairfield Inn and Suites by Marriott Waco North at 4257 North IH-35 from October, 2016, to August 17, 2017.

"That doesn't necessarily seem like a high number, but when you're talking about Legionnaires', it's so rare, it's enough that we're concerned, and the hotel is still open, but we need the public to be aware that we are concerned," said Kelly Craine, Public Health Information Specialist at Waco-McLennan County Public Health District.

Craine said they've been doing investigations with the hotel to determine the source of contamination ever since the first two cases were reported in October of 2016, and even shutdown the hotel pool after the third case was reported in May of 2017.

The concerns have built to the point that it's time to go deeper with the investigation, said Craine.

"What we need to determine is, well is this an issue with a pool or spa, is it an issue to do with the A/C, or is it potable water, and has it spread...is it really isolated in one area, or are we seeing something that's really large where it covers a large area? We don't know that yet, and that is why an independent consultant is so important," said Crane.

Hiring a consultant is one of three mandates the Health District has issued to the hotel.

Frank, the hotel general manager who did not wish to provide his last name, said the safety of their guests was their top priority and, as they have been, they plan to cooperate fully with the health department.

"This is something we've been working on with them, we don't even know who these guests are, but we have complied with the county," said Frank.

He said previous lab tests for Legionnaires' had come back negative, that the first results proved no evidence of guests' claims.

"Lab tests came back negative, but today (Friday) they showed up saying there was another report," said Frank. "I was just informed around 6:25 p.m."

Frank said the health department said they needed to do additional testing and came on August 8 to do a second round of tests which they expect results for next week.

"They took samples of the water system, water heater, sink faucets, showers, hot tubs, ice machines," said Frank.

Frank said the public notice was posted at the hotel and they had been

passing out information on the Legionnaires' cases to current guests.

He said several families have already cancelled and/or checked out early.

"Obviously, we just had a family cancel, and I completely understand, obviously there's panic," said Frank.

"I hope the family affected is doing well, we take these issues very, very seriously, and public safety very, very seriously."

Thousands of dollars had already been spent on this process, but Frank said, safety was the priority.

"We are part of the Waco community and we're not here to cause any illness and sickness," said Frank. "That's our ultimate goal, to give our guests a nice, safe stay and keep Waco's reputation in tact."

Frank said ownership had been notified about the Legionnaires' cases and the order.

"Hopefully we can have a resolution soon," he said.

"If it (the latest tests) prove true, we'll obviously cooperate."

Although they don't anticipate it because staff has been cooperative thus far, Craine said the hotel could be shutdown if the mandates aren't followed.

In consultation with the Center For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Texas Department of State Health Services, the Health District is requiring the Fairfield Inn to implement the following actions immediately to protect the health and safety of guests and staff:

- Hire a qualified consultant to assist with the development and implementation of a water maintenance plan

- Maintain water temperature at 140 degrees
- Notify all guest of the risks to Legionnaire's Disease

"Although a direct source for the disease has not been determined, it is important that all guests are notified of any potential risk while staying at the Fairfield Inn and Suites Waco North," officials stated in a press release.

The rest of the release is as follows:

Legionnaire's Disease is a form of pneumonia caused by a bacteria called Legionella. Cases are often associated with large or complex water systems, like those found in hospitals, hotels, and cruise ships.

The infection is caused by breathing in a mist of vapor containing the bacteria. The most likely sources of infection include potable water, cooling towers for air conditioning systems, decorative fountains and hot tubs.

Legionella can grow if water is not properly maintained. These sources become a health problem when small droplets of water that contain the bacteria get into the air and people breathe them in. It is not spread person to person.

Symptoms include high fever, chills, cough, fatigue, muscle aches, and headaches. These symptoms usually begin 2-14 days after exposure.

Additional information on Legionella is available from the CDC website at [www.CDC.gov](http://www.CDC.gov).