



Documents detail Legionella timeline

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GRAND RAPIDS -- Documents obtained by 24 Hour News 8 under the Freedom of Information Act shed insight into the deadly Legionella outbreak at Saint Mary's Hospital in Grand Rapids.

While hospital officials did report the Legionella case, they never told health department officials anyone died. The hospital also did not notify the general public.

"I don't believe that there are indications that there are indications that the public needs to be alarmed about this," said the hospital's Dr. David Baumgardner.

In interviews with 24 Hour News 8, the hospital insists they followed protocol upon learning Scott Miller was diagnosed with the Legionella bacteria on July 28.

Miller, 37, died the next day.

Documents indicate Saint Mary's contacted the health department July 30, although Kent County Health Department officials said they did not know at the time Legionella was associated with a death.

On August 23, Saint Mary's tracked down the source of the Legionella. The next day, the health department was notified by the hospital that a storage tank tested positive, but still didn't make it clear anyone died.

"It's probably a thing that is underreported," said Kent County Medical Director Dr. Mark Hall. "If you take the denominator of all hospital pneumonias and how many are identified with a definite bacteria, that's a small number."

Saint Mary's officials did exceed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended response to Legionella and took considerable precautions. While there is no firm protocol in notifying the public, the health department said due to the isolated nature of the case the hospital acted appropriately.

Miller's widow, Julie, told 24 Hour News 8 she intends to pursue legal action against the hospital.