

# Two more deaths attributed to Legionnaire's disease | ThisWeek Community News

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**UPDATE**

## Two more deaths attributed to Legionnaire's disease

By [Pamela Willis](#)

*ThisWeek Community News*

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Two more people have died after an outbreak of Legionnaire's disease at the Wesley Ridge retirement community in Reynoldsburg.

Franklin County Public Health confirmed two more deaths today, July 25, and said four people have died since the outbreak began July 9.

A total of 35 residents have been affected by the disease.

"We are terribly saddened by the passing of two more members of our community and extend our thoughts and prayers to their families and friends," Methodist ElderCare CEO Margaret Carmany said July 25.

"We continue to be as proactive as possible in assisting investigators and continue to follow all their recommendations," she said. "As always, our residents' safety and well-being is our first priority."

Carmany said that per the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations, water pipes at Wesley Ridge are being "superheated" again.

"This process began last night and will continue throughout the day," she said.

She said preliminary results from the CDC show legionella bacteria in the water system but the exposure source has still not been determined and the investigation is ongoing.

"We have no assurance as to when final results will be available," she said.

Carmany said filtered, CDC-approved showerheads are in place in common shower areas, so showering is allowed on site but not yet in individual apartments.

She said the drinking water is also still restricted, with Wesley Ridge supplying residents with bottled water and ice.

Carmany said people affected by the disease were between the ages of 63 and 99 and that most have been treated and returned home.

### **July 23 story**

A spokeswoman for Franklin County Public Health said July 23 the source of an outbreak of Legionnaires' Disease at the Wesley Ridge retirement community in Reynoldsburg appears to be the facility's plumbing system.

Mitzi Kline, community health director at Franklin County Public Health, said Tuesday, July 23, that a total of 27 cases of Legionnaires' Disease have been confirmed so far at Wesley Ridge.

Updated figures show the number of cases is at 32 as of July 24.

She said the first confirmed case occurred July 9.

Two people have died and 20 residents have been hospitalized.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have taken more than 80 water samples from the Wesley Ridge water system and are continuing to test the system, Kline said.

"The age range of the (affected) residents is between 63 and 99," she said. "The illness most affects middle-aged and older persons, particularly people who smoke or have other lung problems. Also at increased risk are people who have compromised immune systems."

Kline said Legionella bacteria are found naturally in the environment, usually in water. The bacteria grow best in warm water, in places such as hot tubs, cooling towers, hot water tanks, large plumbing systems or the air-conditioning systems of large buildings.

"Wesley Ridge does receive municipal water from the city of Reynoldsburg, but we have not had any other cases elsewhere, so it appears to be somewhere in the Wesley Ridge plumbing system," she said.

She said the disease cannot be passed from person to person but affects people who breathe in a mist or vapor that has been contaminated with the bacteria.

"One example might be breathing in the steam from a whirlpool spa that has not been properly cleaned and disinfected," she said.

It is unlikely that people could get the disease from drinking tap water at Wesley Ridge, but residents were provided with bottled water as a precaution, she said.

Kline said Wesley Ridge personnel have been "very proactive" in testing and cleaning water supplies by bringing in a private testing company and the CDC.

"To help prevent more cases, they are transporting people to the Holiday Inn for showers," Kline said.

Peg Carmany, CEO of Methodist Eldercare Services, said Tuesday, July 23, the restriction on showers won't be lifted at Wesley Ridge until the installation of CDC-approved showerheads is completed.

"With the installation of the showerheads, we hope to get life back to normal for the residents,"

she said.

She said many of the people who were hospitalized are home and doing well on antibiotic treatment.

"In general, the mood of the residents is amazingly positive," she said. "They are the greatest generation, for sure, and I love every one of them."

Kline said the onset of symptoms for the disease is two to 10 days after exposure.

"There is still a potential for new cases, but with the showering stopped and any drinking of the water on July 10 and remediation efforts completed, we are hopeful we will see the end of this outbreak very soon," she said.

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