

Legionnaires' bacteria shuts down Dartmouth PD

By [Curt Brown](#)

cbrown@s-t.com

March 07, 2014 11:15 PM

DARTMOUTH — The Dartmouth Police Station is being shut down after the bacteria that causes Legionnaires' disease was found in the hot water system, Police Chief Timothy M. Lee said Friday night.

Lee said an officer got sick about a month ago and was hospitalized. After tests showed that the officer had Legionnaires' disease, a form of pneumonia, the station was checked. A report came back Friday that the legionella bacterium had been found in the department's hot water system, he said.

With the station being shut down until further notice, Lee said emergency 911 calls are being transferred to the Westport Police Department where a Dartmouth dispatcher has been assigned to handle those calls.

All non-emergency calls are going through the mobile command center Bristol County Sheriff Thomas M. Hodgson has provided to Dartmouth police. The vehicle, parked in the Dartmouth Police Station's parking lot, will be used to conduct dispatch services and regular business, the chief said.

Dartmouth arrests are being booked at the state police barracks on Faunce Corner Road in Dartmouth.

A total of 82 employees, including 67 police officers, work out of the Russells Mills Road station, Lee said.

Legionnaires' disease got its name in 1976 when a number of Legionnaires attending a convention at a Philadelphia hotel came down with the disease. The Centers for Disease Control said on its website that it carries a mortality rate of 5 percent to 30 percent.

According to the CDC, the bacteria grow best in warm water, such as the kind found in hot tubs, cooling towers and hot water tanks.

People get Legionnaires' disease when they breathe in small droplets of water in the air containing the bacteria. The bacteria are not spread from one person to another, the CDC said.

Lee said the Dartmouth Board of Health has hired a consultant, who will clean the water supply.

"They tell us as long as we don't use the hot water in the building it is safe," he said.

However, out of "an abundance of caution," officials decided to close down the building and make alternative arrangements, Lee said.

"We want to make sure everyone is safe. They deserve a safe work environment," he said. "We will do everything we can to remediate the problem before we go back in."

The department was still in the process of moving dispatch out of the building Friday night, the chief said.

He added that he does not know how long it will be before the station reopens.

"I expect it will be until the middle or the end of next week before we will have answers," he said.

