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## Legionnaire's hits 6 at hotel in Albany

Best Western location is in cleanup mode after state identifies problem

By Cathleen F. Crowley

Updated 09:06 p.m., Thursday, February 2, 2012

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ALBANY — Six cases of Legionnaire's disease have been linked to the [Best Western Sovereign Hotel](#) at 1228 Western Ave., the state Department of Health said Thursday.

The guests who became ill stayed at the hotel between September and December, according to [Peter Constantakes](#), a health department spokesman.

Tests confirmed Monday that higher than normal levels of legionella bacteria were present in the hotel's water system, Constantakes said.

"We are fully cooperating with the Department of Health on this matter, and have taken all recommended steps to eliminate the bacteria," said Phoenix-based Best Western International in a statement. "Of note, the Department of Health has not closed the hotel, which means that the Department of Health has determined that current guests are not at risk based upon the remedial

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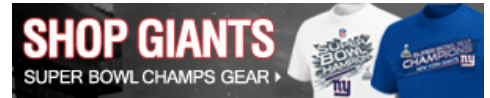
measures we have taken. In addition, we have provided a list of recent guests to the Department of Health for monitoring. We consider guest safety most important, and we have and we will do everything we can to address the matter."

Legionnaire's is a severe form of pneumonia. It is usually caused by breathing in the mist from hot tubs, showers or air conditioning units contaminated by legionella. Symptoms include fever, chills, muscle aches and a high fever. It usually develops 2 to 14 days after exposure.

The disease often crops up in hotels and water parks where people are exposed to water spray. The [Luxor hotel](#) in Las Vegas and the four-star Diamante Beach Hotel in Spain have experienced Legionnaire outbreaks in recent weeks.

The six Best Western guests who became ill have recovered. It was state epidemiologists who tracked the illness back to the hotel. Water tests were conducted at the hotel on Jan. 24 and the results were confirmed on Monday.

Best Western Sovereign will flush its water system on Sunday under the supervision of county officials, said [Mary Rozak](#), spokeswoman for [Albany County Department of Health](#).



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The state and county health departments also have instructed the hotel to inform current and prospective customers about the problem, and the county is contacting guests who have recently stayed at the hotel. The hotel also has raised the temperature of the water to help kill off the bacteria.

"The bottom line is everyone has recovered," said Rozak. "This is not an outbreak or a crisis. This has been identified and it is being acted upon."

In 2010, there were more than 400 cases of Legionnaire's disease in New York, including 10 in Albany County. The disease is usually mild and most people recover.

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