

## Legionnaires'-associated deaths grows to 12 in Flint area

### ***Two more deaths added to state's count of people who died***

State health officials have increased the number of deaths associated with an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease in the Flint area to 12, up from 10.

“To date, 91 cases and 12 deaths have been identified in total for 2014 and 2015 in Genesee County,” Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Chief Medical Executive Dr. Eden Wells said in a statement released today.

The state health department said the new cases, including an additional case of a person getting ill, were identified by state health officials from hospital testing data recently sent to the department.

“Of the three additional cases, two had not been appropriately reported to the public health system,” the release said. “The third case was reported in a different jurisdiction and there was no epidemiologic information available to link it to the outbreak.”

The announcement came a day after the Free Press ran a [report that identified eight people](#) who were diagnosed with Legionnaires' and later died.

Health officials now say five of the deaths occurred from June 2014 through March 2015 and seven deaths during the second spike of the outbreak from May 2015 to October 2015.

The source of the outbreak has not been definitively determined or directly connected to the municipal water system, but the illnesses began after Flint changed its water supply from Lake Huron to the Flint River in April 2014.

Investigators looked at a several exposures including hospitals, water and community venues, health officials said.

“The investigation was able to identify a common source of exposure for 50 individuals (55 percent) of the 91 total confirmed cases, which is a hospital in Flint,” the release said.

It did not identify the hospital, but said it is served by Flint's municipal water system.

The Free Press found that seven of the eight people identified in an article Sunday were treated at McLaren Flint for other ailments shortly before their Legionnaires' diagnoses.

McLaren Flint tested for the Legionella bacteria, which health experts say is often found in water and can lead to Legionnaires' disease, in 2014, amid an increase in Legionella cases and concerns about the water supply. Hospital officials say a "low level" of the bacteria was found and that they responded quickly with preventative measures.

The hospital, along with current and former employees of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, are being sued by families who got ill and families whose relatives died.

Other than the raw numbers, state health officials have released little information about those who were sickened or died during the Legionnaires' disease outbreak, including names.

A spokeswoman with the state health department declined to say if any of the individuals identified by the Free Press match the descriptions of Legionnaires' disease-associated fatalities included in state numbers, citing "privacy concerns regarding protected health information."

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