

Lacy Lakeview hotel under investigation after more Legionnaires' disease reports

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The Waco-McLennan County Public Health District is once again requiring the Fairfield Inn at 4257 N. Interstate 35 in Lacy Lakeview to notify staff and guests of a risk of Legionnaires' disease. Four cases of the disease were reported in guests between October 2016 and August, and two cases were reported in guests this month, according to the health district. Staff photo — Rod Aydelotte

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For the second time in less than 12 months, local health officials are requiring a Lacy Lakeview hotel to notify guests of a risk of Legionnaires' disease.

Two cases of Legionnaires' disease have been reported in people who stayed this month at the Fairfield Inn and Suites Waco North, 4257 N. Interstate 35 in Lacy Lakeview, according to a press release from the city of Waco.

The Waco-McLennan County Public Health District required similar notices from the hotel in August after four cases of the disease were reported in guests dating back to October 2016.

A representative from Fairfield Inn declined to comment.

In addition to notifying staff and guests of the disease risk, the hotel will also be required to allow the health district to conduct an environmental investigation of the property, according to the press release. No specific source for the disease has been identified.

The bacterial disease is a form of pneumonia and is typically contracted through inhalation of mist or vapor from contaminated water. Infected people are not considered contagious.

“Cases are often associated with large or complex water systems,” according to the city’s press release. “Legionella (the bacteria that causes Legionnaires’ disease) can grow if a water system is not properly maintained. The infection is caused by breathing in a mist or vapor containing the bacteria. The most likely sources of infection include potable water, cooling towers for air conditioning systems, decorative fountains and hot tubs.”

When the health district looked into the hotel almost a year ago, the business was required to develop a water maintenance plan and maintain a water temperature above 140 degrees.

Symptoms of Legionnaires’ disease typically start two days to two weeks after exposure and include high fever, chills, cough, fatigue, muscle aches, and headaches, according to the press release. Anyone with symptoms should see a doctor.

Health departments reported about 6,100 cases of Legionnaires' disease in 2016 in the United States, though it is likely underdiagnosed, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About one in 10 people who get the disease die, according to the CDC.

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