

Legionella bacteria confirmed at Whitehall nursing home

Officials from Franklin County Public Health said two residents of the Manor at Whitehall tested positive in July for Legionella bacteria.

"Legionella is a class B reportable disease. So, once it's identified in the clinical setting, it's required to be reported to public health" said Franklin County public health commissioner Joe Mazzola.

Mazzola said the residents, believed to be in their 60's, were hospitalized.

A separate test will determine whether they had full-blown Legionnaires' Disease characterized by pneumonia-like symptoms. Results from that won't be known for at least a week.

An environmental assessment was conducted at the Langley Avenue facility, which included an inspection of all plumbing, heating and cooling systems and all pipes and waters systems to determine if the source of the bacteria came from inside the nursing home.

Health officials said while the bacteria can't be spread from person-to-person, it's contracted by breathing in contaminated mist or vapors from a man-made water source such as a shower, whirlpool spa, or fountain. While no other cases have been confirmed, on July 25, management at the Manor at Whitehall sent out a letter to nearly 150 residents and staff advising them to avoid using showers or tap water from inside the building for drinking or cooking. Instead, people are urged to sponge bathe, drink bottled water and purchase bags of ice until further notice.

"Legionella is a commonly found bacteria in water. So, what happens is when

you splash water in your face with droplets, the water aerosolizes and gets into your lungs" Mazzola added.

Wilma James has lived at the facility for six years.

"We had some meetings last weekend and informed us about this disease and what they'd do to help prevent it. I've never had experiences like this before" Wilma said.

Franklin County Public Health said they've held town hall forums with residents and staff at the facility to keep them updated. Other town halls are planned for Thursday and Friday.

Franklin County Public Health officials said a hotline was established to answer people's concerns and questions about the Manor at Whitehall case (614-525-3097).

You can also visit [Franklin County's Public health website](#).