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Legionnaires' disease found in assisted living facility

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MAPLE GROVE — State and local health authorities say they're investigating two cases of Legionnaires' disease in residents at the SilverCreek on Main assisted living facility in Maple Grove.

The first resident's symptoms began Aug. 22, and the second resident's symptoms began Sept. 12. Both residents were hospitalized and are recovering, the Minnesota Department of Health said in a statement Thursday.

The state's working with SilverCreek to identify possible sources of the disease, and the facility has hired its own consultant.

"Available evidence indicates the source of the Legionella, the bacteria that causes Legionnaires' disease, is most likely within the building water system, though an exact source must still be determined," the health agency said.

Legionnaires' is a type of bacterial pneumonia spread by inhaling water mist contaminated with Legionella bacteria. Symptoms include fever, fatigue, headache, muscle aches, chills, shortness of breath, loss of appetite and coughing, according to the state Health Department.

Most people exposed to Legionella do not develop Legionnaires' disease, although people over age 50 and others who are smokers or who have chronic health conditions are at increased risk. It is not spread from person to person.

SilverCreek's operators said Thursday that while the issue appears isolated to a "small area of the property" and "the risk to additional residents is minimal," the facility has closed its pools as a precaution and are advising residents to hold off on showers and use bottled water for drinking and brushing teeth.

State officials said Maple Grove's water system is fine.

"This really has to do with the facility and their water system. The city of Maple Grove water supply is safe and meets water quality standards," said Kris Ehresmann, the Minnesota Health Department's director for infectious disease. "The general public is not at risk."

Minnesota typically sees 50 to 60 cases a year and most people exposed to Legionella don't develop the disease. But people over 50 and others who are smokers or with chronic health conditions are at increased risk. Legionnaire isn't spread from person to person.

Minnesota typically sees 50 to 60 cases in a year. The last major outbreak took place in 2016 in Hopkins. A beverage processing plant in Hopkins was identified as the likely source of that outbreak. Twenty-three people were sickened in the outbreak. One person died.

The disease was first identified at an American Legion convention in Philadelphia in 1976.

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