

UAW Senior Citizens Center Addressing Legionnaires' Outbreak  
WCBU | By [Joe Deacon](#)

Published October 2, 2020 at 1:46 PM CDT

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Don Bly wants to find out how the bacteria that causes Legionnaires' Disease wound up at the UAW Senior Citizen's Center in Pekin.

“It’s something that I’m sure it’ll come out later on, but I would like to know now,” said Bly, the building manager.

Tazewell County is at an alert level for the disease, with seven cases confirmed since January. Two of those have been at the senior center. A man in his 70s who lived in the high-rise died in August from the disease, while a woman who was diagnosed with Legionnaires’ has since recovered in the hospital and has returned to the senior center.

“The county was on alert for it, and then it showed up in our building, so I don’t know,” said Bly. “I don’t know whether maybe there’s not enough chlorine in the water. I’m not sure.”

Bly said he has been working with a water specialist and the state health department to eradicate the legionella bacteria from the facility and follow Center for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

“We’re just going taking it one step at a time, and we’ll get it done,” said Bly, adding workers are just about done changing all the shower heads throughout the facility.

“We’re replacing them with a filtered shower head, which means that it’s got a special filter installed in it that will stop the bacteria from going out into the spray.”

But he noted that is merely a temporary solution, as the filters only last about 30 days.

“We will be doing that until we get our filtration system hooked up to our water system that will filter the water,” he said. “It’s going to be quite an undertaking because we’ll probably have to replace the water softener also and get a water softener system that will work with the filtration system.”

Bly said the plan is to have the new system in place within two months, adding water restrictions related to the bacteria has posed a challenge for residents in recent weeks.

“It’s been a little rough,” he admitted. “The bacteria is in the hot water; it’s not in the cold water, so they could take a cold a shower. The faucets in the bathroom and the sink, they should only be running that like the size of a pencil.

“The bacteria’s in a mist that comes off of your shower or your sink or water droplets that you inhale. So you want to keep it that the flow of the water coming out of the faucet is at a minimum to not create any of that.”

An Illinois Department of Public Health spokeswoman said they also are working with the UAW Senior Citizen's Center on implementing mitigation measures.

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