



**McHenry Western Lake County EMS System
System Memo #26-4**

To: MWLC EMSS PERSONNEL
From: MWLC EMSS
Date: 6/11/26
RE: Situational Awareness – Legionella Case

Purpose: Communicate detection of a case of confirmed Legionella within our EMS System.

Goal: Provide situational awareness to EMS Personnel and detail PPE recommendations.

A resident at Riverside Residence, 3516 Waukegan Road, McHenry, IL 60050 has tested positive for Legionella. Two other residents have been hospitalized. If responding to this location, PPE should include: N95 masks, plastic gowns, protective glasses and gloves. Legionella is spread from inhaled or aspirated contaminated water droplets. Please see the included CDC fact sheet for more details.

Please direct questions and concerns to the EMS Office, 815-759-8040.

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LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE

Legionnaires' (LEE-juh-nares) disease is a serious type of pneumonia (lung infection) caused by bacteria called *Legionella*. If you develop pneumonia symptoms and may have been exposed to *Legionella*, see a doctor right away. Be sure to mention if you have used a hot tub, spent any nights away from home, or stayed in a hospital in the last two weeks.

Legionnaires' Disease Can Cause Pneumonia Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of Legionnaires' disease can include:

- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Muscle aches
- ▶ Fever
- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Headache

Doctors use chest x-rays or physical exams to check for pneumonia. Your doctor may also order tests on a sample of urine and sputum (phlegm) to see if your lung infection is caused by *Legionella*.

Legionnaires' Disease Is Serious, but Can Be Treated with Antibiotics

Legionnaires' disease is treated with antibiotics. Most people who get sick need care in a hospital but make a full recovery. However, about 1 out of 10 people who get Legionnaires' disease will die from the infection.

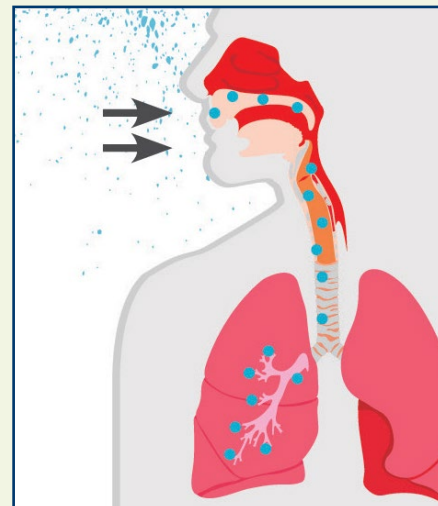
Certain People Are at Increased Risk for Legionnaires' Disease

Most healthy people do not get Legionnaires' disease after being exposed to *Legionella*. Being 50 years or older or having certain risk factors can increase your chances of getting sick. These risk factors include:

- ▶ Being a current or former smoker
- ▶ Having chronic lung disease, such as emphysema or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- ▶ Having a weakened immune system from diseases like cancer, diabetes, or kidney failure
- ▶ Taking medication that weakens your immune system

Legionella Usually Spreads through Water Droplets in the Air

In nature, *Legionella* lives in fresh water and rarely causes illness. In man-made settings, *Legionella* can grow if water is not properly maintained. These man-made water sources become a health problem when small droplets of water that contain the bacteria get into the air and people breathe them in. In rare cases, someone breathes in *Legionella* while they are drinking water and it "goes down the wrong pipe" into the lungs. You can't catch Legionnaires' disease from someone else. You also can't get someone else sick if you have it.



Legionnaires' disease, a type of severe pneumonia, is caused by breathing in small droplets of water that contain *Legionella*.

Common Sources of Infection

Outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease are often associated with large or complex water systems, like those found in hospitals, hotels, and cruise ships.

The most likely sources of infection include:



Water used for showering (potable water)



Cooling towers (parts of large air conditioning systems)



Decorative fountains



Hot tubs