



***Village of Vernon Hills
290 Evergreen Drive, Vernon Hills, IL 60061***

Memorandum

DATE: November 7, 2009

FROM: Michael Allison, Village Manager

**SUBJECT: Press Release
Legionella Outbreak at The Park in Vernon Hills**

Recently there have been reports of the outbreak of Legionella or Legionnaires Disease at "The Park" retirement community in Vernon Hills. The Village of Vernon Hills and Countryside Fire Protection District are working with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the lead agency, Lake County Health Department (LCHD), the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Horizon Bay owner of The Park to assist these agencies and the owner in efforts to reduce the risk of further illness.

The Village of Vernon Hills and Countryside Fireside Fire Protection District first learned about the report of legionella infection on Tuesday November 3.

From that point we were informed that the IDPH and LCHD would be taking samples in different areas of the building for testing to determine the source of the Legionella bacterium. This sampling took place on Thursday November 5 with results anticipated in two weeks. In addition it is our understanding that a number of residents have been tested and further tests for ill residents will be conducted in the future with the results evaluated by IDPH and LCHD.

Concurrent with these tests was a directive from the IDPH to The Park enumerating immediate actions to be taken to reduce the risk of further spread of the Legionella bacteria. These actions pertained to shutting down any appliance that sprays or mists such as the aquatic elements of the facility including the rain forest, waterfall and spa.

On Friday November 6 a conference call took place that included all of the aforementioned agencies including the Village of Vernon Hills represented by Mayor Roger Byrne, Village Manager Michael Allison and Countryside Fire Protection District represented by Fire Chief Jeff Steingart. In this discussion The Park was advised again of the measures to be taken to reduce the potential of further illness and the status of sampling of the facility and other information related to the directives from the IDPH.

As a follow up to the conference call Mayor Byrne, Village Manager Michael Allison, Chief Jeff Steingart and Building Commissioner Michael Atkinson conducted a site visit of The Park. At that inspection the aquatic systems were not in operation as directed by the IDPH. We also met with the management of The Park to confirm that information would be disseminated to residents, employees, and visitors of the facility. Representatives of Horizon Bay indicated they would complete this information by the end of Friday evening. This information is attached.

The Village of Vernon Hills and Countryside Fire Protection District continue to monitor the situation in our public safety role for the community.

The following is a web site providing more information on Legionellosis.

www.idph.state.il.us/health/infect/reportdis/legion.htm



Pat Quinn, Governor
Damon T. Arnold, M.D., M.P.H., Director

525-535 West Jefferson Street • Springfield, Illinois 62761-0001 • www.idph.state.il.us

November 6, 2009

Dear Resident of The Park Independent/Assisted Living Facility:

The Lake County Health Department and the Illinois Department of Public Health are working to investigate reports of legionellosis (*Legionella* infection) associated with the The Park independent/assisted living facility.

The bacteria that causes legionellosis is found in many different water sources - man-made and natural - and it is not certain that those who tested positive for legionellosis acquired the illness at The Park. However, it is possible that there is an association between this facility and the legionellosis cases. We would like to provide you with the following information about legionellosis.

Who gets legionellosis?

Anyone can get this disease; however, certain people are more likely to get legionellosis. Individuals at higher risk include smokers, the elderly, those with lung or kidney disease, diabetes, cancer, and weakened immune systems because of diseases or medications.

What is legionellosis?

Legionellosis is a form of pneumonia caused by bacteria called *Legionella pneumophila*.

What are the signs of legionellosis?

The signs of legionellosis may include fever, cough, shortness of breath, pneumonia, chills and body aches.

How do you get legionellosis?

The disease is spread by inhaling aerosols (mists) of water containing the bacteria. The disease is **not** spread from person to person.

Is there a cure for legionellosis?

Yes. Legionellosis can be treated with antibiotics.

How soon do signs of legionellosis appear?

Symptoms of the disease appear from two to ten days, mostly commonly five to six days, after coming in contact with the bacteria.

Why is the health department interested in cases of legionellosis?

The health department would like to minimize the risk of infection to others in the community. Health care providers are asked to report all cases of legionellosis to their local health department.

Where can I get more information on legionellosis?

You may contact the Lake County Health Department at 847-377-8130. You may also access more information on the internet by clicking the link:

<http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/index.htm>.

What persons can do to reduce the risk for illness:

- Try to reduce your contact with water sprays/mists.
- Take baths instead of showers. While filling the tub, leave the bathroom. Fill the tub slowly and carefully to minimize the production of water sprays/mists. If you are unable to take a tub bath, consider a sponge bath.
- If you have special concerns about your risk for this infection use bottled water for drinking or brushing teeth until the situation is further clarified. If you do not have access to bottled water, you may boil water and set it aside for drinking and brushing teeth.
- If possible, you may choose to re-locate while testing is being done.

If you experience symptoms of pneumonia, please check in with your health care provider. If you have any questions or concerns, contact the Lake County Health Department at 847-377-8130.

Lake County Health Department
Illinois Department of Public Health

The Park at Vernon Hills
Letter to Residents & Employees

November 6, 2009

Dear Resident/Employee:

At The Park at Vernon Hills, the safety and security of our residents and employees is a top priority, and a duty we take very seriously. We became aware that two individuals that resided at The Park at Vernon Hills were diagnosed with pneumonia related to Legionella. We are working very closely with the relevant public health authorities to determine whether there is any relationship between these illnesses and the two individuals' residence in our community. In the meantime, we are taking strong precautionary measures to help ensure your safety and protect the health of residents and employees. Please see the attached letter from the Illinois Department of Public Health describing Legionella and measures that you can take to reduce the risk of illness.

The relevant public health authorities are conducting an investigation with strong support from our team here in our community. If you begin to experience flu or pneumonia-like symptoms, we encourage you to go see your primary healthcare provider. We will continue to update you as we become aware of additional information.

If you have further questions, please contact the Lake County Health Department at (847) 377-8130. You can also visit the following website: <http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/index.htm>. As always, if you have questions or concerns of any kind, please don't hesitate to come and talk to me.

Sincerely,

Jane Woloson
Executive Director
The Park at Vernon Hills