



Director of Environmental, Health and Safety

Information Sheet for Queens College Employees and Students: What to Do if the Cooling Tower in Your Building Tested Positive for Legionella

If you live, work or attend class in a building that tested positive for *Legionella* bacteria, here's what you need to know:

1. The cooling towers that tested positive are being disinfected.

The cooling tower is a unit that recirculates water to cool the inside of a building. The water inside a cooling tower is separate from the water in the drinking and bathing water systems. Cooling towers are usually located on top of a building.

All cooling towers on the campus that tested positive for *Legionella* bacteria are being disinfected to reduce the risk of Legionnaires' disease.

These steps are consistent with State and City regulations that apply to hospitals, businesses and residences throughout the city.

2. Building owners are required to register, inspect and clean the towers regularly.

Legionella growth in cooling towers can be controlled by regular cleaning. The City requires building owners to register cooling towers, inspect them every three months, and follow testing and disinfection standards set by the Health Department.

3. Most people exposed to *Legionella* bacteria don't get sick.

The risk of anyone getting infected with *Legionella* bacteria is very low, and buildings can continue to be occupied while disinfection is being done.

Legionella bacteria can cause a type of pneumonia called Legionnaires' disease. People who inhale water vapor (mist) that contains the bacteria can get sick. Like other types of pneumonia, Legionnaires' disease is a bigger health problem for certain groups: those aged 50 or older, cigarette smokers and people with chronic lung disease or weakened immune systems. Children rarely get Legionnaires' disease. People who do get sick usually develop symptoms about five to six days after being exposed to the bacteria. Most people respond well to medicine (antibiotics).

4. Legionnaires' disease is not contagious.

People can't get sick from others. The only way to get sick is by breathing in water vapor containing the bacteria.

5. It's safe to drink and bathe with tap water.

The test result that prompted this notification is *not* from the drinking or bathing water systems. Those systems are completely separate from cooling towers. The tap water is safe to use.

6. It's safe to be in air conditioning.

Your home, car and building air conditioning units are safe. The air that comes out of the air conditioning system is separate from the water in the cooling tower. When the weather is hot and humid, it's important to stay in a cool place.



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7. If you develop symptoms such as fever and cough, along with chest pain or difficulty breathing, get medical care right away. Tell your health care provider you are concerned about Legionnaires' disease. Your provider may need to do tests to find out if you are sick with Legionnaires' disease or a different infection. It is especially important that people at higher risk for health problems from Legionnaires' disease get care promptly.

For more information, visit nyc.gov/health/legionnaires