

28 February 2020

LEGIONELLA FOUND IN HAYMARKET COOLING TOWERS

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District is advising people who may have been in the Haymarket area in the past month to be on the lookout for symptoms of Legionnaires' disease following identification of *Legionella* bacteria in two further cooling towers in the area.

The contaminated cooling towers were found as part of a joint Public Health Unit and City of Sydney Council investigation of two cases of Legionnaires' disease earlier in the year who had both visited the area, whilst a third case was notified this week. The latest case is a woman in her fifties.

The affected cooling towers have been decontaminated, and there is no ongoing risk from them.

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District Director of Public Health, Professor Mark Ferson, said symptoms can develop up to 10 days from the time of exposure to contaminated water particles in the air and include fever, chills, a cough and shortness of breath and may lead to severe chest infections such as pneumonia.

"People who develop this disease are diagnosed by chest X-ray and a urine test and usually require antibiotic treatment in hospital," Professor Ferson said.

Public Health Units in local health districts across NSW follow up every case of Legionnaires' disease and work closely with local councils in the management of cooling towers. Routine testing of cooling towers helps identify contamination early and allows for prompt cleaning and corrective actions.

In 2018 NSW Health strengthened the Public Health Regulation to reduce the community's risk of Legionnaires' disease, requiring building owners to conduct risk assessments and monthly tests on cooling towers and notify high levels of *Legionella* and other bacteria to local councils.

Legionnaires' disease cannot be spread from person to person. Outbreaks of the disease are most frequently linked to contaminated water cooling systems of air conditioning plants in large buildings.

For more information about water cooling systems management contact your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 or

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/legionellacontrol/Pages/default.aspx>

For more information on Legionnaires' disease visit:

https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/legionnaires_disease.aspx