

WATER DEPARTMENT

NEWS AND UPDATES

LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE

Legionella bacteria live outside in soil and water but rarely cause infection in their outdoor environment. Once the bacteria is introduced to plumbing it can flourish in the warm, stagnant water and become a real health concern.

The number of Legionnaires' cases reported to the CDC (Center for Disease Control) has increased since 2000. Approximately 6,000 cases per year are reported. The CDC estimates the death rate from Legionnaires' disease is one in 10, one in four if contracted at a healthcare facility.

Outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease have been traced to cooling towers, hospital plumbing, ornamental fountains in restaurants, hot tubs, water heaters, outdoor shower hoses, and showerheads. The CDC found that showers and faucets were the most common source of outbreak in buildings.

Increases in infection may be due to older water pipes, aging populations, or energy conservation such as turning down water heater thermostats to a temperature ideal for Legionella growth.

Take a few simple precautions:

WATER HEATERS: Check the owners' manual for the proper temperature setting on your water heater. Regularly flush hot water pipes, such as showers and faucets, to prevent stagnant water. Regularly clean shower heads.



FOUNTAINS: Regularly drain, clean, and disinfect. Fountains and ponds that are plumbed to Surfside water require an approved air gap and annual inspection. Always maintain an air gap when filling ponds with a garden hose.

HOT TUBS: Regularly check the disinfectant and chemical levels in hot tubs. Hot tubs should be cleaned as recommended by the manufacturer. Always maintain an air gap when filling hot tubs with a garden hose. All outdoor hot tubs require backflow prevention installed at the meter.