TO: WCU Campus Community

FROM: Mark Mixner  
Vice President for Administration & Finance

DATE: August 25, 2015

SUBJECT: UPDATE #6: Important Health Notice

The University continues to work cooperatively with the Chester County Health Department and a water treatment company to eliminate legionella bacteria on campus. Despite the presence of bacteria in some buildings on campus, the Health Department continues to assure us that there is no reason to curtail any University activities.

As previously reported, bacteria were found in hot water systems of certain buildings. Those systems were treated this past Sunday and re-tested to confirm the effectiveness of the treatment; test results should be available within the next two weeks.

Because legionella bacteria are common in the environment and can grow in areas where there is warm water, the University is continuing its voluntary testing. The University’s goal is to ensure that the campus environment is as safe as possible.

Recent test results from the lab showed legionella bacteria in the hot water systems in the warehouse, 220 E. Rosedale Ave., Filano Hall, and the E. O. Bull Center, although the strain of bacteria in the E. O. Bull Center does not cause Legionnaires’ disease. The University currently is treating the hot water systems in these facilities and will re-test after the treatment is completed. Additionally, one of the apartments in the Village tested positive for a trace of the bacteria, although again it is not a strain that causes Legionnaires’ disease. University Student Housing has notified the residents in that apartment and is completing the appropriate remediation.

The University will be working with the water treatment company to develop a long-term plan to reduce the risk of legionella bacteria in the cooling towers and hot water systems on campus.
Questions & Answers (Q&A)

Q. Is it safe to continue normal activities on the West Chester University campus and in University buildings?
A. According to the Chester County Health Department, there is no need to curtail any activities on the University campus or in University buildings.

Q. Who should be tested for the legionella bacteria?
A. According to the Chester County Health Department, the CDC protocols are that only persons diagnosed with pneumonia should be tested for the legionella bacteria.

Q. What is Legionnaires’ disease?
A. Legionnaires’ disease is a severe form of pneumonia—lung inflammation usually caused by infection. Legionnaires’ disease is caused by the bacteria legionella, which is common in the environment.

Q. How does a person contract Legionnaires’ disease?
A. Most people who become infected aspirate microscopic water droplets containing the bacteria.

Q. Who is most at risk of contracting Legionnaires’ disease?
A. Most healthy individuals do not become infected with legionella bacteria after exposure. People at higher risk of getting sick are: older people (usually 50 years of age or older), current or former smokers, those with a chronic lung disease (like COPD or emphysema), and those with weakened immune systems.

Q. Can Legionnaires’ disease be contracted from someone else who has the illness?
A. No. Legionnaires’ disease is not communicable and cannot be passed from person to person.

Q. What are the signs and symptoms of Legionnaires’ disease?
A. Signs and symptoms of Legionnaires’ disease can include: cough, shortness of breath, high fever, muscle aches, and headaches. These symptoms usually begin 2 to 14 days after being exposed to the bacteria.

Q. Where can I find further information on Legionnaires’ disease?
A. A link to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which explains Legionnaires’ disease, is below.

http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/index.html