TO: WCU Campus Community

FROM: Mark Mixner
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SUBJECT: UPDATE #7: 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 assures us that there is no reason to curtail any University activities.

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 showed low levels of bacteria in selected areas in a few buildings: Schmidt Hall (5th floor men’s shower), Tyson Hall (7th floor east wing), Old Library (men’s restroom), Ruby Jones (Room 203 sink), 220 E. Rosedale Ave. (men’s restroom), Filano Hall (water heater) and the Grounds and Garage Building (water heater). The affected areas in these buildings have been remediated. New test results for Schmidt Hall and Tyson came back negative. New test results for the water heater in Filano Hall again showed low levels of legionella, even after remediation; the hot water tank in that building will be replaced. New test results for the other buildings (Old Library, Ruby Jones, 220 E. Rosedale Ave., and the Grounds and Garage Building) should be available in about two weeks. All other buildings that were tested or re-tested showed no signs of legionella bacteria.

The University is 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
Important Health Notice – July 29

Important Health Notice – Update #1 – July 31

Important Health Notice – Update #2 – Aug 3

Important Health Notice – Update #3 – Aug 7

Important Health Notice – Update #4 – Aug 12

Important Health Notice – Update #5 – Aug 21

Important Health Notice – Update #6 – Aug 25