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Early this week the county confirmed three additional cases of Legionnaires disease. These cases were identified as suspect prior to August 21 but only this week was the medical information released that listed them as confirmed cases. Yesterday, we learned of a second death from a resident that had originally contracted Legionnaires' disease. All of us at Elmira Housing Authority are saddened by these illnesses and deaths.

Testing has confirmed that the building water system is free of *Legionella* bacteria and there have been no new reported illnesses since August 21. We have implemented a rigorous *Legionella* testing regime to document that the building water remains free of *Legionella*. Mr. Keane of Legionella Risk Management ([www.legionellae.org](http://www.legionellae.org)), the *Legionella* expert contracted by Elmira Housing Authority, is developing a written plan for actions to take in the event of any future water main failures.

Mr. Keane has identified the root cause of the outbreak: the water main break which occurred less than 30 yards from Flannery Towers. Additionally Mr. Keane has the following comments;

Sludge in the bottom of water main pipes can host an army of bacteria including: *Legionella*, *Pseudomonads* (bacteria that causes bacterial pneumonia) as well as *Stenotrophomonas* and legions of other bacteria. For this reason several guidelines exist on this subject including EPA and CDC Guidelines on actions to be taken after water main breaks.

Hopefully this outbreak will result in the following changes that will reduce the risk of serious outbreaks related to water main failures from happening again;

- ✚ Better understanding by Municipal Water providers of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Primary Water Regulations Public Notice Rule requiring actions taken by Water Authorities when water main failures occur to alert those impacted especially those in non-regulated facilities which are not covered by healthcare guidelines. The actions list should include specific flushing and testing instructions for chlorine and / or hot water temperature in buildings with at risk populations. Boiling drinking water for instance, while helpful would most likely have had little to no impact on this outbreak.

- ✚ Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and / or the State of New York issue guidelines or at least a notice to housing for the elderly of the risk of Legionnaires' disease. Presently the only guidelines from the CDC and State are for healthcare facilities. Most of those that got ill at Flannery Towers had multiple comorbidities in addition to age that placed them at higher risk for Legionnaires' disease including COPD, end stage renal disease, asthma and heart disease.
- ✚ Better understanding of the impact of proposed legislation on *Legionella*. New York State has a proposed regulation (A10292) which would limit the hot water temperature in multifamily buildings including apartment building and hotels to 120°F. If this rule is enacted these buildings would be required to spend significant amounts of money on other methods to control *Legionella* in their buildings. EPA Disinfection Byproducts rule which was enacted a few years ago had a similar impact on making it potentially very expensive for buildings to treat water for *Legionella* thus significantly increasing the potential for future outbreaks.
- ✚ Industry standards of performance for building water systems should be established. The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) is nearly finished with a standard "Preventing Legionellosis Associated with Building Water Systems". It is imperative that this standard be finished and published as soon as possible.