

8 February 2020

LEGIONELLA FOUND IN HAYMARKET COOLING TOWER

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

The contaminated cooling tower is no longer operating, and there is no ongoing risk in the area. The contamination of the tower was found as part of an investigation into two cases of Legionnaires' disease earlier this year. The two affected people – one male in his forties and another male in his seventies, have since recovered.

South Eastern Sydney Deputy Director of Public Health, Dr Vicky Sheppard, said symptoms can develop up to 10 days from the time of exposure due 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,” Dr Sheppard 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 to identify contamination early and allow 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 visit:

<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