



Epic Hotel Reopens After Legionnaires' Scare

The Health Dept. still can't say for sure if it was in fact the Epic that caused the disease.

By JANIE CAMPBELL

Updated 1:00 PM EST, Sun, Dec 27, 2009



A health advisory that [shuttered downtown's Epic Hotel](#) has been lifted after investigators conducted a thorough testing of its water system and oversaw a cleaning and de-contaminating process that would make Mr. Clean weep.

Still, it's hard to imagine a run on rooms. [The hotel has been closed for two weeks at the cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars per day](#), under suspicion that three cases of Legionnaires' disease among its guests -- one fatal -- were caused by bacteria in the water.

Samples taken from the property revealed chlorine levels were not high enough to prevent bacterial growth, according to the [Miami-Dade County Health Department](#) -- a problem believed caused by an overzealous water filtration system stripping the water of chemicals, like chlorine, that keep it clean.

Authorities stressed they cannot yet say if the Epic was in fact the source of legionella bacteria; only that the water system is cleared for everyday use and they are confident in the filtration system now in place.

"We will continue to work with them to make sure the water supply is safe," said administrator [Lillian Rivera](#) of the [Miami-Dade County Health Department](#).

Legionnaires' is believed only to spread through contaminated water entering a person's lungs; the hotel removed and sanitized shower fixtures after disconnecting the suspect filtration system and pumped chlorinated county water in its place. In a process called "super chlorination," large amounts of chlorine were pumped through by health officials to kill any possible lingering bacteria.

The Epic also installed a new system using copper-silver ionization to prevent bacteria growth and serve as a secondary method of disinfecting the water.

Whether they can similarly disinfect traveler's memories enough to return to the Epic remains to be seen. Of course, with today's report that [Miami-Dade County water has triple the toxins](#) of the national average, perhaps they should shower with a 24-pack of [Evian](#) no matter where they stay.

First Published: Dec 27, 2009 12:42 PM EST