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## [Nursing home treating bacteria in water system](#)

### **Moran Manor has hired firm to fight presence of Legionella**

Matthew Bieniek Cumberland Times-News

WESTERNPORT — Allegany County health officials continue to monitor the presence of Legionella bacteria at a local nursing home, six months after a case of Legionnaires' disease was reported at the facility.

Local health officials said that to protect the privacy of residents and their families, they would not release details about the single confirmed case at Moran Manor from last December.

“There have been no cases of Legionnaires' disease reported in Allegany County in the 2011 calendar year,” said Dr. Sue Raver, the health officer for Allegany County.

At Moran Manor though, tests continue to show a presence of the Legionella bacterium at the facility. The presence of Legionella in the environment isn't a concern, since the bacterium is widely present, but the concentration of the bacterium can rise to levels that are a concern, health officials said. Earlier this month, the nursing home was placed under water restrictions, said Raver in a press release.

“The water restriction include the use of bottled water instead of tap water for drinking and dental hygiene and no shower baths,” Raver said in a press release. “Individuals who are not currently ill need not seek medical attention and do not need to be tested, health department officials said. Moran Manor has hired a firm specializing in fighting Legionella bacteria in drinking water, Raver said.

Among the methods being used to eradicate the bacteria are heat treatments and super-chlorination, which kill the bacteria.

The nursing home failed to keep employees informed about the presence of the bacteria in the water system over the past seven months, Gary Gatewood, organizing director for Local 27, United Food and Commercial Workers International, said. In fact, it was some time before employees even knew that a case of Legionnaires' disease had occurred.

Gatewood is concerned about the lack of communication and of potential risks to employees since the nursing home can't seem to eradicate the bacterium and the concentration reaches levels requiring water restrictions.

State officials are being kept informed, but say the Allegany County Health Department handles the day-to-day monitoring of the case.

“We are there in a support capacity,” said Karen Black of the state Department of Health and

Mental Hygiene.

The disease can be fatal, especially in the elderly and people with compromised immune systems. Legionnaires' cannot be transmitted between people, it is caught by breathing in a mist or small droplets of contaminated water in the air, health department officials said.

Legionnaires' is a type of pneumonia, according to county health officials, and most cases can be resolved with antibiotics. About 8,000 to 18,000 people are hospitalized with the disease each year.

A number of concerns are present in terms of the concentration of the bacteria and the location in the water system, Rene Najera, an epidemiologist with the state Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, said. "A lot of these (situations requiring monitoring) ... go on for months and years," Najera said. After six months of negative tests, monitoring usually ends, he said.

Raver stressed that officials at Moran Manor have done everything the health department has asked them to do and no additional cases of the disease have been confirmed and reported to the department.

Legionella can be very difficult to eradicate once established in a water or heating ventilation or cooling system, said Brian Dicken, environmental health director at the Allegany County Health Department.

Gatewood said several employees have come down with respiratory illnesses over the past few months, although none of those cases has been confirmed as Legionnaires' disease. Moran Manor Administrator Rebecca Cuppett did not respond to a request for comment by press time.

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