



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Alabama Department of Public Health continues investigation of *Legionella* pneumonia

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) continues to investigate a *Legionella* pneumonia outbreak in Florence, Ala. At this time, all known cases have been associated with Glenwood Nursing Home facility.

Positive environmental cultures for *Legionella* bacteria have been found from two cooling towers at Regency Square Mall and one cooling tower at Southwire. Testing continues to determine if there is a linkage between any cooling towers and the Glenwood Nursing Home outbreak. Out of precaution for the community, the cooling towers have been turned off and the owners are working with the health department to receive information on proper cleaning of the towers. Cooling towers on rooftops can dispense water droplets over some distance.

Dr. Karen Landers, Assistant State Health Officer for the Alabama Department of Public Health, reports that there are 15 patients with confirmed *Legionella* pneumonia. Ten patients are suspected to have had *Legionella* pneumonia, but test results on these patients have not been returned from the laboratory. One death from *Legionella* pneumonia is included in the 15 reported cases. No new patients have been identified since Oct. 10.

Dr. Landers states, "Over the past week, our physicians, hospitals, and urgent care clinics have been working with the health department to identify any new patients with *Legionella*. They are taking our advice to do additional testing for *Legionella* on their pneumonia patients."

The Glenwood facility remains open and operational, is cooperating fully with public health officials, and has performed recommended remediation steps, although no water vapor generating sources have been identified at the facility at this time.

*Legionella* pneumonia is not transmitted from person to person. People get *Legionella* pneumonia when they breathe in a mist or vapor containing the bacteria. Most healthy people exposed to the germ do not become sick. People at higher risk for illness are those who are older than 50, are current or former smokers, have chronic lung problems such as COPD, have weak immune systems from cancer, diabetes or kidney failure, or are on chemotherapy.

*Legionella* pneumonia is caused by a germ that occurs naturally in the environment. The germ grows best in warm water. Some places where the germ can be found include hot tubs, cooling

towers, hot water tanks, large plumbing systems, and decorative fountains. An example might be from breathing in droplets sprayed from a hot tub that has not been properly cleaned and disinfected.

For additional information, please contact your health care provider or local health department.

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