



Wes Moore, Governor | Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor | Atif Chaudhry, Secretary

To: The Honorable Chief Judge Morrissey and Agency Leadership

From: Chichi Nyagah-Nash, Acting Deputy Secretary

Date: December 4, 2024

Subject: District Courts: Baseline testing detects Legionella Bacteria

We respectfully request that you disseminate the information below, in its entirety, to your affected employees, as soon as possible.

Following similar efforts launched by the [U.S. General Services Administration](#), the Maryland Department of General Services (DGS) has established a comprehensive and regular cadence of air and water quality tests at state facilities to safeguard the health and safety of employees and visitors.

On November 25, proactive baseline tests were conducted at two Maryland District Court buildings – located at 5800 Wabash Avenue and 700 E. Patapsco Avenue. On December 4, DGS was notified that legionella bacteria was detected in the water of the two District Court buildings. There are no reports of Legionnaire’s Disease at this time.

DGS is following best practices to remediate these issues informed by guidance from the Maryland Department of Health (MDH). The buildings will remain open, but water restrictions have been put in place while remediation is undertaken. DGS has consulted with an independent industrial hygienist and MDH regarding protocols for health and safety in similar situations.

Safety Guidance

- Employees and visitors **should not** consume water in these buildings. DGS will provide bottled water at security desks, outside of courtrooms, and in the

hallways leading to judges' chambers.

- It is further recommended for employees and visitors to wash their hands with warm, soapy water or use hand sanitizer. DGS will post signage on bathroom and utility room doors containing guidance.

Next Steps: Remediation Activities

- Preparations for sanitization and flushing activities for remediation will take place on December 5.
- Water sanitization and flushing will take place on December 7 and December 8. The building will be closed, as water will be shut off while sanitization and flushing takes place. The building will be reopened on Monday, December 9.
- Re-testing will also take place on December 9.
- Results will take 10-14 days to be returned.

Information about Legionella

- Legionella bacteria can be found in many natural and man-made water systems.
- The most common way for someone to get sick is by breathing in mist containing Legionella when contaminated water is aerosolized (i.e. water mist or vapor).
- Most healthy people exposed to Legionella don't get sick.
 - Symptoms include cough, fever, headaches, muscle aches, and shortness of breath
- People at increased risk of getting sick are:
 - People 50 years or older
 - Current or former smokers
 - People with cancer or underlying illnesses such as chronic lung disease (like COPD or emphysema), diabetes, liver disease, or kidney disease
 - People with weak immune systems or who take drugs that weaken the immune system (like after a transplant operation or chemotherapy)

Health Guidance

Current precautions are aligned with Centers for Disease Control recommendations and indicate that although no one should drink the water, use of the water for flushing of toilets and washing of hands with soap and warm water poses very low risk.

Legionnaires' disease is one type of pneumonia and is caused by inhaling aerosolized water (i.e. water vapor, mist) that contains Legionella bacteria. Typical sources of

aerosolized water include showers, fountains, whirlpools, and spas, which are not common in office building settings.

If you are experiencing symptoms of pneumonia (fever, cough, shortness of breath, chest pain), contact your health care provider. There are many forms of pneumonia, and respiratory infections with symptoms that overlap with pneumonia. Your health care provider can help determine the cause of your symptoms. Urine tests or sputum tests are the best tests to diagnose Legionnaires' disease. Note that blood tests are usually NOT helpful in diagnosing Legionnaires' disease.

Additional information about Legionella can be found at <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/IDEHASharedDocuments/LEGIONELLOSIS.pdf> or <https://www.cdc.gov/legionella/communication-resources/general-fact-sheet.html>

DGS values the well-being of our tenants and is committed to providing a safe and comfortable work environment. We will keep you apprised every step of the way as we work to get this fully resolved. The next communication will come when the post-remediation water testing results are received.

Please do not hesitate to contact Muhammed Abdullateef, DGS's Assistant Secretary of the Office of Facilities Management, with any questions or concerns. He can be reached via email at muhammed.abdullateef@maryland.gov, and via cell phone at 443-742-5524.

Respectfully,
Chichi Nyagah-Nash

Cc: Atif Chaudhry, DGS Secretary