



Jackson County Department of Public Health

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JCDPH AND EBCI INVESTIGATING THREE CASES OF LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE

The Jackson County Department of Public Health (JCDPH) and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Public Health and Human Services (EBCI PHHS) are investigating three cases of Legionnaires' disease in people who visited Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort in Cherokee, NC during May-November 2018. The property's management is assisting in the investigation, treating its water system, and taking steps to provide information to past and current guests. The North Carolina Division of Public Health (NC DPH) is also assisting in the investigation as needed.

Legionnaires' disease is a type of pneumonia caused by inhaling aerosol droplets of water contaminated with *Legionella* bacteria. Sources of the contaminated water droplets can include showers, hot tubs, faucets, cooling towers, misters, and decorative fountains. Most people exposed to *Legionella* bacteria will not get sick.

Legionnaires' disease is treatable with antibiotics, but it can cause severe illness and sometimes results in death. The disease is not spread from person to person. Symptoms are very similar to other types of pneumonia and can include cough, shortness of breath, fever, muscle aches, and headaches.

Symptoms usually begin within 2 to 14 days after exposure to the bacteria. People who develop symptoms and have visited the property or surrounding area should seek medical attention from their primary care provider.

People who are at increased risk of getting sick include:

- People 50 years of age and older
- Current or former smokers
- People with chronic lung disease
- People with weakened immune systems
- People who take drugs that can weaken their immune systems (after a transplant operation or chemotherapy)
- People with underlying illnesses such as diabetes, kidney failure, or liver failure

Please note that it cannot be confirmed whether any of the cases were exposed to *Legionella* bacteria while visiting Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort. *Legionella* bacteria is naturally occurring in the environment and has up to a 14-day incubation period, making it difficult to pinpoint exact location of exposure. Regardless, Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort has taken immediate steps to ensure the safety and health of their guests.

Anyone with additional questions can call the Health Department at 828-587-8201 Monday-Friday from 8 AM-5 PM or visit <http://health.jacksonnc.org/>.



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More information on Legionnaires' disease is available here:

<https://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/diseases/legionellosis.html>

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