In light of a recent outbreak of Legionnaire’s disease in the city of Anaheim, and in an effort to prevent future outbreaks, the Orange County Health Care Agency is committed to providing education and resources to area facilities that have cooling towers or other potential sources of Legionella.

For more information visit: ochealthinfo.com/eh/water or contact us at (714) 433-6000.

WHAT IS LEGIONNAIRES’ DISEASE?

- Legionnaires’ disease is a type of pneumonia caused by the Legionella bacteria. Legionella pneumonia generally causes hospitalization, and death occurs in 10% of cases.
- Legionella bacteria can grow in warm man-made water sources, including cooling towers, hot tubs/spas, decorative fountains, misters, air conditioners, water heaters and tanks, and large plumbing systems that are not well maintained.
- Legionella is not spread from person to person, but rather by inhaling a mist or water vapor containing the bacteria (i.e. aerosolization).

WHAT IS A COOLING TOWER?

A cooling tower is a unit that recirculates water to make the inside of a building cooler. It is often part of a building’s heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system. Units called evaporative coolers and fluid coolers are also considered cooling towers.

Benefits of proper cooling tower maintenance:

- Increases heat transfer efficiency
- Minimizes maintenance and cleaning
- Minimizes corrosion
- Controls pathogenic organisms such as Legionella, non-tuberculosis mycobacterium and fungi

HOW DO I REDUCE THE RISK OF LEGIONELLA TRANSMISSION ON MY PROPERTY?

- Develop and follow a Water Management Plan for understanding your building water system. This plan should describe:
  - How water flows through your building
  - Interventions to be implemented when controls are not met
  - Areas where Legionella or other bacteria could grow
  - Process for documenting these activities
  - Any control and monitoring measures that will be applied
  - Specific elements of a Water Management Plan should include system maintenance, water treatment, shutdown and start-up procedures, and disinfection. The plan should identify responsible persons for every step of the Water Management Plan which likely includes a multidisciplinary team of experts.
- The plan should address whether testing for Legionella will be routinely performed to assess the effectiveness of disinfection and maintenance of the cooling towers, or what triggers will be used to determine the need for Legionella-specific testing.
- Refer to the ASHRAE (formerly known as the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers) or the Cooling Technology Institute (CTI) guidelines for details.
- Follow the manufacturer’s maintenance guidelines for cooling towers and related equipment on your property.
- If your property has a pool and/or spa, they should be operated and maintained in accordance with original equipment manufacturer (OEM) requirements or if regulated as a public pool, follow applicable codes.
- If your property has an ornamental fountain and open water features, they should be included in the above-mentioned management plan (refer to the ASHRAE standards).
- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) also has various resources, including: Developing a Water Management Program and a Legionnaires’ Disease Fact Sheet.