

Death toll rises to seven from NY Legionnaires' disease

August 4 2015

An outbreak of Legionnaires disease in New York has killed seven people and infected 86 others, as the city moved Tuesday to draw up new legislation to halt future outbreaks.

Sixty-four people are still being treated for the form of pneumonia in hospital since the outbreak began on July 10 in the south Bronx neighborhood.

The disease is spread by bacteria discovered in the cooling towers of five buildings in the area.

Officials say those who died were older patients and had pre-existing [medical conditions](#). Legionnaires' disease is not contagious and can be treated with antibiotics.

"Our hearts go out to everyone who is inflicted and particularly the families of those we have lost," New York Mayor Bill de Blasio told a news conference on Tuesday.

City hall has identified and de-contaminated five cooling towers, which were found to harbor the Legionella bacteria.

New York's drinking water supply, fountains, shower heads and pools are safe and unaffected, authorities say.

"It is not a contagious disease. It cannot be passed from person to

person," said the mayor.

"There is no risk to our water supply from Legionnaires disease. Another crucial point, it can be treated, it is treatable with antibiotics," he added.

Leaflets were distributed over the weekend to inform residents in the Bronx, where the outbreak has been concentrated, and invite them to a public meeting late Monday on the outbreak.

The disease, a serious pulmonary infection, is spread by bacteria that thrive in warm water, such as that found in hot water pipes, air-conditioning systems and industrial ponds.

Infections result from inhaling airborne droplets of [contaminated water](#). The incubation period lasts between two and 10 days.

Anyone with symptoms such as fever, coughing and shortness of breath in the Bronx should seek medical attention immediately, officials said.

De Blasio said July 30 was the peak of the outbreak and that there had been a reduction in recent days in the rate of new cases, and said the city was working to prevent future outbreaks.

The mayor said the disease had been a "persistent health problem" across the United States for years, and had been "slowly and steadily growing all over the country."

He said the city would unveil [new legislation](#) later this week designed to halt future outbreaks.

The proposed legislation would set new inspection standards for buildings with cooling and condensing units, and impose penalties for failure to comply, he said.

The disease takes its name from its first outbreak, in 1976, at a Philadelphia hotel where a meeting of the American Legion society was being held.

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