

Legionnaire's Disease

Legionnaires' Disease is a type of lung infection and form of pneumonia which is caused by the inhalation of water contaminated with bacteria known as Legionella. People contract Legionnaires' Disease by breathing in water mist or water vapor that has been contaminated with Legionella. This disease can cause serious and life-threatening injuries and even death if not treated quickly and appropriately.

Legionella bacteria are found in water environments, and especially thrive in stagnant, warm water. Outbreaks of Legionnaires' Disease are often associated with commercial structures with large water systems that are conducive for the growth of Legionella bacteria. For example, hotels, cruise ships, and even hospitals have complex water systems with water cooling structures, water heating structures, large piping and plumbing systems connected to showers, sinks, bath tubs, hot tubs, humidifiers, large air systems, and misting devices which allow Legionella to survive, multiply, and be dispersed to the public. In particular, newly constructed buildings are prone to Legionella bacteria in its water systems. When a new building is completed but not occupied, water may be let into the system initially and may remain stagnant at warm temperatures without any disinfection. The water system must be flushed and cleaned prior to occupancy which may be weeks or months after construction is completed.

The above is just one example, but as is evident, Legionnaires' disease and the presence of Legionella bacteria in commercial water systems is preventable. Thus, if someone acquires Legionnaires' disease, litigation can be pursued to determine responsibility. Often, many parties may be named in a lawsuit. For example, when an outbreak occurs at a hospital, a hospital owner, architect of the hospital, developer, management company, and water supplier for the hospital may all be named as defendants in a lawsuit.

The Ratzan Law Group recently settled a case for approximately \$1 million involving the death of a man who died from contracting Legionnaire's disease in the newly constructed wing of a Florida hospital. The patient was one of the first patients in a room located within the brand new wing of the hospital. Allegations included the failure to properly inspect, monitor, repair, clean and maintain the water systems when such inspections, monitoring, repairing, cleaning and maintenance would have discovered and eliminated the presence of Legionella.

When you, a family member or someone else you know suffers an experience involving the contraction of Legionnaires' Disease, the attorneys at Ratzan Law Group are available to answer any legal questions and assist in any way possible.