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Round Rock hotel shut down after Legionnaires' disease outbreak



Claire Osborn - American-Statesman Staff
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Legionnaires' disease on the rise nationwide

KTBC - Austin, TX



FOX 9

00:0002:23

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Three of the victims fell ill over the summer and have since recovered, health official says.
- Hotel spokeswoman said business hopes to reopen Oct. 24 after clearing inspections.

ROUND ROCK — A Round Rock extended-stay hotel, SpringHill Suites by Marriott, was closed this week after three guests and one employee contracted Legionnaires' disease, a Williamson County health official said Thursday.

Another guest at the hotel, who has not yet been diagnosed, was taken to a hospital Wednesday night after being found "quite ill" in bed, said John Teel, the executive director of the Williamson County and Cities Health District.

The three guests who got the bacterial infection, which is spread through water systems and can cause deadly pneumonia, all stayed at the hotel this summer and have recovered, Teel said.

All of them had been in the hotel's hot tub or sat near it and breathed the mist, Teel said. One of the guests stayed at the hotel in June, one was there in August, and one was there in late August and early September, he said.

The hotel employee who was diagnosed with the disease Tuesday had worked at the facility for only a week but had walked several times through the room where the hot tub is, he said.

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The hotel closed at 5 p.m. Wednesday and hopes to reopen Oct. 24 after the property clears all inspections, said Gail McIntyre, a spokeswoman for SpringHill Suites.

“In consultation with the Williamson County Health District, and with an abundance of caution, the hotel has already engaged an expert third-party firm that specializes in remediating environmental health issues,” McIntyre said in a news release.

“The SpringHill Suites Austin Round Rock apologizes to all guests who are inconvenienced by this unforeseen incident, and the hotel is working to relocate all current guests, and those with existing reservations, to nearby hotels,” the release said.

Investigators have taken samples from the hotel’s water systems and are waiting for results, which can take up to 14 days to receive because of the slow-growing bacteria, Teel said.

He said the four-story hotel has 104 rooms, is usually 80 percent occupied and is about 17 years old.

The state’s health department did not notify Williamson County officials until last week that two of the guests at the hotel had contracted Legionnaire’s disease, Teel said.

The guests were Texas residents but lived out of the county. He said sometimes there is a delay between the time a county health department gets a report about a disease and the time it reports it to state officials.

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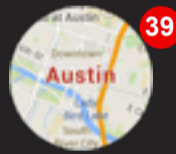
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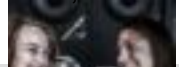


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