



News Release

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Legionnaire's Disease Identified Locally

In recent days health officials became aware of four local cases of Legionnaire's Disease, a serious but rare form of pneumonia having a case fatality rate of 5% to 30%. An investigation identified a possible source, and public health has taken precautions to prevent further cases. Three of the four people affected are from Chelan County and one is from Okanogan County.

Public health investigations showed that the only known common element among the patients was a visit to the produce department of a local supermarket during the times they were exposed. This isn't absolute proof that the disease was contracted at that market, but it is strong enough to take precautionary measures. Produce misting systems have been the source of legionella infection in past outbreaks; these infections occur mainly when people inhale tiny contaminated droplets. Under direction from Chelan-Douglas Health District the supermarket quickly closed its produce department on Friday afternoon and overnight while it sanitized the area, and stopped the use of the misters until the system can be replaced or professionally cleaned. The grocery store involved was the Safeway in Wenatchee. Store officials were very cooperative in correcting the potential problem. Produce purchased there is as safe as usual. According to Barry Kling, Administrator at Chelan-Douglas Health District, "There is no reason to think there is any ongoing risk. We appreciate the proactive response of the folks at Safeway."