**LEGIONNAIRES’ DISEASE**

**HELPFUL INFORMATION**

**THE DISEASE** A severe form of pneumonia caused by Legionella bacteria. Symptoms of this type of respiratory infection include high fever, chills, cough, muscle aches, headaches, and diarrhea.

**MOST PEOPLE EXPOSED TO THE BACTERIA DO NOT BECOME ILL.**

**TRANSMISSION** Legionella bacteria reach people when a water supply is contaminated. Hospitals, hotels, and large buildings are common locations for outbreaks. The drinking water supply is the primary source. Once the bacteria enters a water supply, it can multiply and be distributed throughout the building, coming into contact with people through fountains, mist machines, humidifiers, cooling towers, showers and sinks.

**WHO’S SUSCEPTIBLE?** The bacteria may enter the lungs through aspirated water droplets. While smokers, the elderly, and those with asthma, chronic lung disease or suppressed immune systems are more likely to become infected, healthy people may also be at risk.

**PREVENTION, MAINTENANCE & MONITORING** To prevent Legionnaires’, the drinking water supply must be kept free of Legionella bacteria. The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have developed a standard for risk management to support proper maintenance and monitoring of building drinking water systems.

**FALSE**
Legionnaires’ disease most often occurs in large outbreaks.

**THE FACTS**
- Only 4% of Legionnaires’ disease cases are part of known outbreaks. There are approximately 5,000 cases per year in the United States.
- Peer-reviewed studies published in the New England Journal of Medicine, The Lancet: Infectious Diseases, and many other publications have found the drinking water supply to be the primary source of the bacteria.
- Bacteria can grow in the plumbing and in the shower head, which breaks up the water into a fine mist which can easily be inhaled allowing bacteria to travel directly to the lungs.