



Alliance to Prevent Legionnaires' Disease

LEGIONNAIRES' PREVENTION: **COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS**


PROTECTING
NEW YORK'S
WATER SUPPLY


Alliance to Prevent Legionnaires' Disease, Inc. | 1200 G Street NW, Suite 800 | Washington, DC 20005
preventlegionnaires.org | 1-202-434-8757

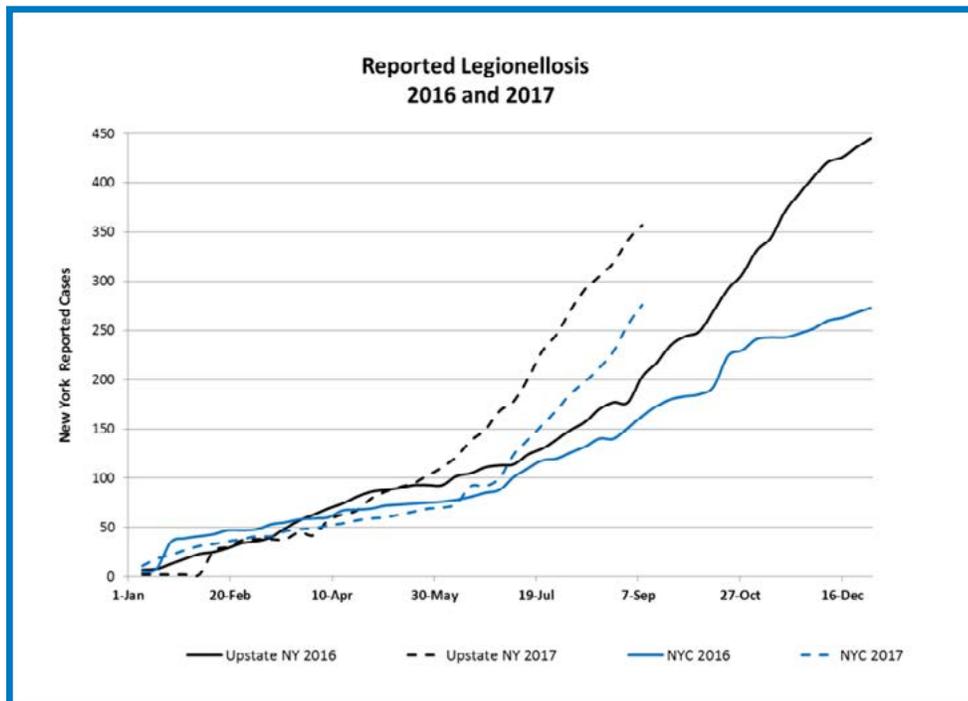
Legionnaires’ disease is a waterborne illness. While the public is led to believe that outbreaks, typically associated with a single community exposure point, are the biggest concern and consist of the greatest number of cases, the truth is that outbreaks make up approximately 4 percent of the total number of infections. The remaining 96 percent are single, sporadic instances for which epidemiology points to drinking water systems as the bacteria’s main source.

Drinking water systems, with specific regard to the public water supply and distribution system, are where the discussions about preventing Legionnaires’ disease must take place. Solely focusing on the end points of the distribution system to which the public is exposed (shower heads, faucets, ice machines, fountains, cooling equipment, etc.), will not solve the problem. Effective solutions must be comprehensive in nature and must include better control of—and ultimately prevent—water contaminated with Legionella bacteria from reaching our homes and buildings.

The narrowly focused regulations implemented by both New York City and New York State to prevent cases of Legionnaires’ disease are failing to keep New Yorkers safe. In fact, across New York State, more than 598 individuals have contracted Legionnaires’ disease so far this year—a 78 percent increase over the same timeframe in 2016. This increase comes nearly two years after regulations focusing on a single piece of building equipment, established by Local Law 77 of 2015 were put into effect.

NUMBER OF LEGIONNAIRES’ CASES IN NEW YORK*			
	2016 (through September 15)	2017 (through September 15)	percent change
NEW YORK STATE (EXCLUDING NYC)	210	357	70% increase
NEW YORK CITY	146	276	89% increase
STATEWIDE TOTAL	356	633	77% increase

*Source: CDC MMWR Weekly Data



By failing to address single, sporadic cases, state regulations have left members of the public at continued risk for infection. The current regulations would not have prevented James Rouse, a healthy school teacher in the South Bronx, from contracting and ultimately passing from Legionnaires' disease. All five water samples taken from his school months after his death proved to be positive for Legionella.

The regulations would not have prevented Mariel Bloch, a four year old from St. Louis undergoing treatment for Leukemia in Manhattan, from contracting Legionnaires' disease and complicating her treatment. To keep Mariel away from other sick children during her treatment, her parents rented an apartment in Manhattan. After contracting Legionnaires' disease, the family, on their own accord, purchased a Legionella testing kit and tested the water from within the apartment they were renting. The tests came back positive.

The media has reported investigations of numerous building water systems which were triggered by two or more cases of Legionnaires' disease being reported at the same address.

Occupants at the 23rd police precinct in East Harlem and apartment buildings West Harlem, Flushing, Rego Park and Lindenwood, have all recently been told to take caution as their water systems were being investigated for Legionella.

It is unacceptable that hundreds of New Yorkers continue to be infected with this potentially deadly but preventable disease every year. Elected and health officials across New York State must ensure that an adequate disinfectant residual is maintained at all points in the public water system to help prevent the growth and spread of Legionella. They must make better efforts to detect Legionella in the public water and take water samples at the homes and workplaces of individuals who contract Legionnaires' disease. These common sense steps will go much further in saving lives and reducing the incidence of the disease than the City and State's current misguided preventative measures.

