

As you know, since April 2023, the Department of General Services (DGS) along with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has been diligently working to mitigate *Legionella* in the Mission Valley Building in San Diego.

DGS has done continuous testing of the building through a specialized consultant, installed water filters on all water fixtures, performed disinfections of the entire system, and performed other remediation efforts. The facility has been consistently executing a professionally developed water management program, and environmental testing results have demonstrated a steady decline in the levels of detected *Legionella*.

On January 23, 2024, following a case investigation by San Diego County Public Health, the state was notified that an elderly person in San Diego County was diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease and reported visiting the Mission Valley Building in December.

While the source of the infection is not known for certain, out of caution, CDPH is recommending additional investigation and testing of the building including additional evaluation and assistance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to make every reasonable effort to ensure the safety of the building occupants. This additional testing, joint local, state, and federal public health investigation, and consultation will occur the week of February 5.

Given all of the progress in the building's water management, exposure to and infection with Legionnaires' disease continues to be unlikely. At this time, CDPH recommends continuing to provide education and awareness to building occupants and visitors about *Legionella*, including risk factors for getting Legionnaires' disease and to continue offering employees reasonable accommodations.

At the latest Legionella Strike Team meeting, DGS reported the testing performed in November 2023 showed one positive location, which was a shower head in the women's locker room. DGS has yet to receive the report from the latest round of testing that occurred on January 11, 2024.

DGS continues to provide *Legionella* resources on its [website](#), including previous actions completed at this building, as well as resources to learn more about *Legionella*, symptoms of Legionnaires' disease, information on those who are at highest risk of potentially contracting Legionnaires' disease, and various "frequently asked questions" documents.

We understand that this additional report and continuing testing may create some concern and questions. DGS and CDPH will continue to work together to manage this issue proactively and effectively and to provide timely notice and updates to all who might be impacted. We invite you to email any questions to a dedicated inbox: SDMissionValleyBuidling@dgs.ca.gov.

In partnership,

California Department of Public Health and California Department of General Services

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is happening at the Mission Valley State Office building (MVSO)?

As of January 2024, two laboratory-confirmed cases of Legionnaires' disease have been identified in persons who worked in or visited the MVSO building; one patient had illness onset in April 2023 and the other in December 2023. The potential exposure of the second patient was not relayed to public health until January 2024, and the state was notified on January 23, 2024. Per California Department of Public Health (CDPH) protocols, a full public health investigation is required given a common exposure reported by two patients with Legionnaires' disease within a 12-month period.

2. Is the building safe?

The health of MVSO building tenants and visitors is our top priority. As such, the MVSO building water system has been disinfected and tested by an outside consulting firm since early 2023. The levels of *Legionella* have steadily declined since the testing and treatment protocols have been implemented. It is not possible to definitively say whether exposure to the MVSO water system was responsible for either or both illnesses. However, we are proceeding with a comprehensive investigation and consideration of additional mitigation measures as needed.

Personal risk of Legionnaires' disease varies based on age and presence of comorbidities such as underlying lung disease or immunocompromising medical conditions. In general, office buildings are not considered high-risk environments for *Legionella* exposure in healthy people. Building water systems have usually been implicated in *Legionella* outbreaks in other settings that support overnight stays (e.g., hotels) and/or serve populations at higher risk for Legionnaires' disease (e.g., long term care or skilled nursing facilities).

The California Department of General Services (DGS) began coordinating *Legionella* testing and general remediation at various buildings in 2022. The testing strategy was a proactive response to the known reduction in water system usage and stagnancy during the COVID-19 pandemic that could increase *Legionella* growth. Though *Legionella* has been detected in the building during the testing process, corrective actions are ongoing to ensure the water system is well-controlled, including daily flushing and usage of filters on all sink faucets, showerheads, and drinking fountains. These measures are intended to prevent *Legionella* from being aerosolized by the fixtures. With these measures in place, it is unlikely that a person in the building would inhale *Legionella* and even more unlikely that they would become ill with Legionnaires' disease. Person-to-person spread of Legionnaires' disease does not occur.

These activities go above and beyond normal recommendations for response in similar settings. After multiple rounds of sampling and treatment, the sampling event in November 2023 showed no *Legionella* detected in most samples, except for one showerhead, suggesting substantial reduction in the *Legionella*

levels. The most recent round of testing occurred on January 11, 2024, and the results should be available soon.

Given the identification of another case reporting potential exposure at the building, CDPH, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are further investigating.

3. Should this building be closed until the investigation has been completed?

No, in this circumstance the building would not be closed. There are no strict criteria to close a building when *Legionella* has been detected in a building. Even when illness occurs in healthcare settings, such as a skilled nursing facility that houses a vulnerable population, there is rarely a situation that requires that a facility be closed. Legionnaires' disease is not very common; most healthy people do **NOT** get Legionnaires' disease even after being exposed to *Legionella*.

4. What should tenants and visitors do to reduce their risk of Legionnaires' disease?

Most healthy people who are exposed to *Legionella* do not get sick. The key to preventing Legionnaires' disease is to reduce the risk of *Legionella* growth and spread, which is in progress, and for persons at risk for Legionnaires' disease to discuss risk reduction measures with their doctor and take personal steps to reduce their risk.

People at higher risk for getting Legionnaires' disease include those who:

- are over the age of 50 years
- are current and former smokers
- have chronic lung disease
- have a disease or are taking medications that weaken the immune system.

Tenants who are in a higher risk category for illness should consult with their supervisor for Departmental policies for potential reasonable accommodations. Visitors should consult with their healthcare provider to assess their individual risk for illness.

5. What is Public Health doing about this building?

Public Health is taking this situation very seriously, and is proceeding with the following actions:

- The *Legionella* experts at CDC have been consulted to provide additional guidance on testing and further mitigation measures.
- A team of local, state, and federal investigators will come to the building to reevaluate the building water system, repeat sampling for *Legionella* testing focusing on areas of likely exposure, and review and reinforce a water management plan that will ensure safety of tenants.
- CDPH and County of San Diego epidemiologists, supported by CDC, will investigate any other potential community-level

exposures to *Legionella* that these patients might have had, to rule out any unidentified and uncontrolled source(s) of *Legionella* that could be contributing to illness.

- Building tenants are being notified of the recent second case of Legionnaires' disease and be provided information about reasonable accommodations that may be available for those with risk factor(s) for Legionnaires' disease.
- Signage and posters will be put up at entries and inside the building to alert building visitors to the ongoing public health investigation into two cases of Legionnaires' disease with exposure at the building. Visitors with risk factors for Legionnaires' disease are recommended to check in with their doctor for personal prevention measures.

6. If I'm a person at risk for Legionnaires' disease, should I wear an N95 mask when I use the restroom in this building?

When properly fitted and used consistently, N95 masks (respirators) may decrease exposure to aerosolized bacteria and viruses. If a person with risk factors for Legionnaires' disease wants to use an N95 mask in a setting of concern to them, then that is a personal measure that they can consider.