

# Health scare shuts down Volusia hotel

*Seagarden Inn relocates its guests after 2 cases of Legionnaires' disease, officials say.*

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**DAYTONA BEACH SHORES** -- Two cases of Legionnaires' disease -- including one that might have been fatal -- led a hotel to close its doors voluntarily Friday.

The Seagarden Inn relocated all of its guests as a precautionary measure after the Volusia County Health Department informed hotel officials late Thursday that two guests had contracted the disease, said Doug Kosarek, a spokesman for Ocean Waters, the Daytona Beach company that owns the resort. "This was a precautionary measure," Kosarek said. "We take this very seriously."

Seventy-four rooms were evacuated.

Health Department testing for the Legionella bacteria, which cause the disease, began about a week ago, when hotel officials learned that one guest contracted the disease, Kosarek said.

Late Thursday, hotel officials learned of a second case. Because results of the tests will not come back until early next week, they decided to close the hotel temporarily, Kosarek said.

Volusia County Health Department spokeswoman Stefany Strong said that one person who contracted the disease died, but officials have not confirmed whether Legionnaires' was the cause.

The symptoms of Legionnaires' resemble pneumonia: high fever, chills, a cough and sore throat. "We're asking people who are sick to seek medical attention," she said. Strong stressed that the disease cannot be contracted from another person. It can be breathed in through a mist or a vapor, perhaps via steam from a whirlpool that is not properly disinfected. Legionella thrive in warm, stagnant water.

Health-care workers should report cases immediately, she said. Ed Biittig, a Seagarden Inn guest from upstate New York, said hotel employees called guests into a conference room Friday afternoon to tell them they had to change hotels immediately. They said two hotel guests had been sick but did not name the illness. "I think we have the right to know," Biittig said.

Hotel authorities gave guests Health Department contact information and new accommodations at six other hotels owned by Ocean Waves.

There were 122 Florida cases of Legionnaires' disease reported last year, Strong said. Two were in Volusia. The disease was named after a 1976 outbreak that followed an American Legion convention in Philadelphia. An Air Force veteran became the first person to die from the disease.

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