September 26, 2019

“Chemung County Health Department Reports No Link Between Those Ill with Legionella and Environmental Samples Taken as it Continues to Investigate an Increased Number of Legionellosis Cases”

Legionella cases are reported sporadically throughout the year. The Chemung County Health Department and New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) continue to investigate a cluster of Legionellosis cases in the county. We have received the testing results for both patient samples and environmental samples. These tests show there is no link between the ill patients and the environmental samples. The Health Department is awaiting results of several environmental samples. In addition, the Health Department and NYSDOH are investigating a case of Legionellosis at the Chemung County Nursing Facility. There is no reason to believe this new case is related to the larger cluster of cases. All ill patients are recovering. The Health Department continues to work with the patients and NYSDOH on this investigation.

It is important to know the following about Legionellosis:

- Legionellosis is caused by infection with Legionella bacteria. Multiple possible sources are being investigated such as cooling towers, water tanks, large plumbing systems and fountains. Most of the time, results are negative for Legionella bacteria.

- Legionella is typically transmitted by breathing in tiny water droplets present in the air contaminated with the bacteria, not by drinking the water nor by being in contact with someone who is ill with Legionella. Public water systems are not commonly found to be sources of Legionella outbreaks.

- Most healthy individuals do not become infected with Legionella bacteria when exposed. People at higher risk of getting sick are those with a history of chronic disease, smoking, chronic lung disease, cancer or weakened immune systems.

- There is no need for the public to modify their activities in light of this increase in cases. However, persons with respiratory illness should contact their primary care physician or seek health care.

If you have any question regarding Legionella, please call the Health Department at (607) 737-2028.