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Hotel on the Cay Ordered to Cease Operations Amid Legionnaire's Disease

DOH has ordered Hotel on the Cay in St. Croix to cease operations following confirmed Legionnaire's disease cases linked to its water system. Guests are urged to monitor symptoms, while remediation and testing efforts are underway to ensure safety.

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Hotel on the Cay, Christiansted, St. Croix

ST. CROIX — The V.I. Department of Health has issued an immediate Cease-and-Desist Order to Hotel on the Cay in St. Croix following confirmed cases of Legionnaire's disease linked to the hotel's water system. The order mandates the suspension of all operations until the hotel completes remediation of its water systems and further testing confirms the absence of Legionella

bacteria.

“The VI Department of Health has ordered Hotel on the Cay to remediate the hotel water systems and to allow the Department of Health to complete sampling once remediation is complete to show the absence of legionella,” said Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion. “Hotel on the Cay will not be allowed to resume hotel operations until approved to do so by our Environmental Health Division.”

The swift action follows the diagnosis of two confirmed cases of Legionnaire’s disease among recent guests of the hotel, according to DOH. One guest required hospitalization and intubation in an intensive care unit (ICU), while the other is recovering without hospitalization. An additional three suspected cases are currently under investigation.

Legionnaire’s disease is a severe form of pneumonia caused by inhaling water droplets contaminated with Legionella bacteria. The Department of Health’s Environmental Health and Epidemiology divisions are working together to conduct a comprehensive investigation to identify the source and extent of the contamination.

“The health and safety of our residents and visitors are our top priority,” Ms. Encarnacion emphasized. “The Department of Health is working diligently to address this situation and prevent further cases. We urge anyone who has recently stayed at Hotel on the Cay and is experiencing symptoms to seek medical attention.”

Symptoms of Legionnaire’s disease include cough, shortness of breath, high fever, muscle aches, and headaches, typically appearing two to ten days after exposure. Older adults, smokers, and individuals with weakened immune systems are at higher risk of developing severe illness.

Guests who stayed at Hotel on the Cay within the past two weeks are encouraged to monitor their health closely and report any symptoms to their healthcare providers. Testing for Legionnaire’s disease is available via a simple urine sample at the St. Croix Clinical Laboratory, which will open at 6 a.m. on Saturday.

DOH said it has also established a hotline to provide information and answer public inquiries. Residents and visitors can call (340) 725-5389 or (340) 774-7477 ext. 5647 for assistance.

Dr. Esther Ellis, Territorial Epidemiologist, highlighted the Department’s commitment to ensuring the safety of the public: “The hotel is required to conduct remediation efforts, and testing will follow to ensure the safety of the premises.”

DOH said it will oversee remediation efforts and conduct follow-up testing before allowing the hotel to resume operations. Updates on the investigation and the hotel’s reopening will be provided as they become available.

While the current situation is focused on Hotel on the Cay in St. Croix, DOH urges vigilance across the Virgin Islands, including St. Thomas and St. John. Hotels and other establishments that rely heavily on water systems are reminded to conduct regular maintenance and testing to prevent similar outbreaks.