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Update: DOH Identifies Showerheads and Sinks in Hotel Rooms as Source of Legionella Contamination; Corrects Initial Statement

The Dept. of Health confirmed that Legionella bacteria were found in showerheads and sinks in specific hotel rooms. While apologizing for an earlier error about the hotel's water source, DOH said potable water tested negative for contamination

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Hotel on the Cay, St. Croix USVI By. GETTY IMAGES

The V.I. Department of Health has clarified its findings regarding the Legionnaire's disease outbreak at Hotel on the Cay after issuing a correction to a statement it issued earlier today. Contrary to the initial claim that the hotel used solely cistern water, the hotel has confirmed that it

utilizes 100% potable water.

Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion reached out to Chris Pardo, owner of Hotel on the Cay, who confirmed the potable water usage. “On the contrary, Mr. Pardo validated that the hotel has been and currently utilizes 100% potable water,” Encarnacion said. “The VI Department of Health apologizes for the error.”

Despite the correction, VIDOH maintains that the potable water is not the source of Legionella contamination. Tests conducted by the department’s Epidemiology Division confirmed that the potable water in the cistern showed no evidence of Legionella bacteria. Instead, the cases of Legionnaire’s disease were directly linked to the freshwater systems within specific hotel rooms.

“Our testing identified Legionella in the showerhead, kitchen sink, and/or bathroom sinks in those rooms,” said the department. The bacteria is most commonly contracted while showering, as mist from the showerhead can carry the bacteria and enter an individual’s lungs, eyes, or mouth.

DOH [issued a cease-and-desist order on Friday](#) after two hotel guests tested positive for Legionnaire’s disease. Since then, the hotel has cooperated fully with the department to address the issue. Ms. Encarnacion praised the hotel’s efforts, noting that “extensive plumbing replacements and decontamination efforts were completed over the last few days.”

The VIDOH emphasized its commitment to monitoring the situation and providing timely updates. The department reiterated that public safety remains its priority as further tests and evaluations are conducted.