



NEWS RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Doug Bolnick, Public Information Officer, (636) 949-7408

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ST. CHARLES COUNTY REMINDS BUILDING OWNERS, POOL OPERATORS TO USE CAUTION WHEN RESTORING WATER SYSTEMS

ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO – COVID-19 led to reduced use for many buildings and outdoor recreation areas over the past year. As employees return to their offices and outdoor establishments reopen, businesses will restore water systems. The St. Charles County Division of Environmental Health and Protection joins the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in reminding building management about water quality concerns.

“If systems remain stagnant for long periods, there is a chance for contamination of the water quality to occur,” Division of Environmental Health and Protection Director Ryan Tilley reminds. “From bacteria and other waterborne germs to metals and more, these contaminants can threaten public safety and damage plumbing or equipment if operators don’t take necessary precautions before reactivating their water systems.”

Tilley [echoes EPA recommendations](#) that building owners, pool operators and others consult with a plumber and take precautions when restoring water systems for public use:

- Evaluate the age of the system and inspect areas that may have had past problems.
- Drain and clean pipes, water storage systems, water heaters and machinery connected to water lines according to manufacturer’s recommendations.
- Flush the system to remove and replace any additional standing water.
- Consult with your public water provider.

Public Health Concerns

Although the U.S. public water system is one of the safest in the world, contamination can occur. If left untreated, these waterborne germs can infect the stomach, lungs, eyes, skin, and brain. Most who become exposed to these germs suffer minor illness, but certain groups are at higher risk for serious complications.

Legionnaires disease (caused by *Legionella* bacteria) is one of those serious illnesses spread through contaminated water systems. *Legionella* grows in unchecked building water systems and is spread when individuals breathe in contaminated water droplets from the air. Symptoms of Legionnaires’ disease include fever, cough, chills, headaches and muscle aches and usually begin 2-10 days after exposure. The disease can be treated with antibiotics, but 1-in-10 who get sick from Legionnaires disease die from complications. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers [a toolkit for controlling Legionella](#).

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About the St. Charles County Division of Environmental Health and Protection

The Division of Environmental Health and Protection works with residents, area businesses and local organizations to promote healthy conditions in St. Charles County. Division staff conducts facility inspections, collects recyclable material and provides mosquito control treatment across the county to prevent the spread of disease. To learn how the division helps to ensure the community’s well-being, visit sccmo.org/environmental or call 636-949-1800.

About the St. Charles County Department of Public Health

Through the efforts of its three divisions — Environmental Health and Protection, Health Services and Humane Services — the St. Charles County Department of Public Health provides a wide range of services that enhance the well-being of a community that ranks among the healthiest counties in Missouri. To learn how the department assists this region or to find out about volunteer opportunities with any of the divisions, visit sccmo.org/PublicHealth or call 636-949-7400.

About St. Charles County

Founded in 1812, St. Charles County is one of the fastest growing counties in Missouri. With a population of 407,056, it is the state's third largest county. It is home to 17 scenic county parks, encompassing nearly 4,000 acres with additional land under development and more in reserve for future development.

With one of the largest economies in the state, St. Charles County is home to several multi-national companies, including General Motors, Citi, MasterCard Worldwide and Boeing. It is ranked among the top 25 counties in the nation in high-tech job growth by the Progressive Policy Institute and consistently has the lowest unemployment rate in the Metropolitan St. Louis area.

St. Charles County has more than 1,170 employees in more than 30 departments and offices, who work to make the county an excellent place to live, work and shop. For more information, visit sccmo.org.