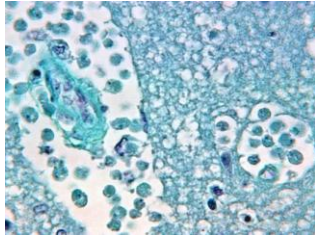


10:25 a.m. EDT August 28, 2014



LaPLACE, La. — St. John the Baptist Parish officials are carefully monitoring the parish's water system after test results confirmed the presence of *Naegleria fowleri*, which is a deadly amoeba that can infect the brain.

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, or DHH, issued an emergency order late Wednesday requiring the parish to perform a chlorine burn throughout its water system to kill the amoeba.

According to the parish and state health officials, the water is safe to drink, and no one has become sick from the amoeba.

St. John Water District 1 was set to increase chlorine levels to combat the brain-eating amoeba early Thursday.

The water system was sampled as part of DHH's surveillance, which was started earlier in August. During the amoeba testing, the department found that the system was not in compliance with the state's emergency rule, which requires systems to maintain a minimum disinfectant residual level of .5 milligrams per liter throughout all of their distribution lines, according to a statement by the DHH. The disinfectant residual level is known to control amoeba.

The parish says it tests its water system daily, but why chlorine levels dropped below state required levels is now under investigation.

"Clearly, as we get to exactly what has happened in this case, the protocol will be revisited and if changes are necessary we will take care of that," said parish President Natalie Robottom.

"The parish utilities department is taking immediate actions to fully chlorinate the water system and eliminate the threat," Robottom added.

However, with the holiday weekend approaching, residents are being asked to use caution.

"It is safe to drink, to eat, and use to cook," Robottom said. "The problem is to make sure that you keep precautions to prevent the water from going up your nose. Now understanding it's the holiday weekend, swimming and slip 'n' slide, those are all areas to proceed with caution."

The water system serves 12,577 people in the towns of Reserve, Garyville and Mount Airy.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, personal actions to reduce the risk of *Naegleria fowleri* infection should focus on limiting the amount of water going up a person's nose and lowering the chances that *Naegleria fowleri* may be in the water.

The CDC recommends the following preventative measures:

- Do not allow water to go up your nose or sniff water into your nose when bathing, showering, washing your face, or swimming in small hard plastic/blow-up pools.
- Do not jump into or put your head under bathing water (bathtubs, small hard plastic/blow-up pools) - walk or lower yourself in.
- Do not allow children to play unsupervised with hoses or sprinklers, as they may accidentally squirt water up their nose. Avoid slip-n-slides or other activities where it is difficult to prevent water going up the nose.
- Do run bath and shower taps and hoses for five minutes before use to flush out the pipes. This is most important the first time you use the tap after the water utility raises the disinfectant level.
- Do keep small hard plastic/blow-up pools clean by emptying, scrubbing, and allowing them to dry after each use.
- Do use only boiled and cooled, distilled or sterile water for making sinus rinse solutions for neti pots or performing ritual ablutions.
- Do keep your swimming pool adequately disinfected before and during use. Adequate disinfection means: pools: free chlorine at 1-3 parts per million (ppm) and pH 7.2-7.8, and hot tubs/spas: free chlorine 2-4 parts per million (ppm) or free bromine 4-6 ppm and pH 7.2-7.8.
- If you need to top off the water in your swimming pool with tap water, place the hose directly into the skimmer box and ensure that the filter is running. Do not top off by placing the hose in the body of the pool.