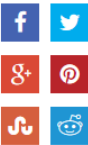




The Opera House Hotel in the Bronx, seen on Aug. 7, 2015, is one of several buildings where the cooling tower tested positive for Legionnaires' disease. (Credit: Anthony Lanzilote)

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Lawsuit against the Opera House Hotel, source of Legionnaires' outbreak filed; more to come

By SHEILA ANNE FEENEY August 24, 2015

A Manhattan attorney has filed what he believes to be the first lawsuit seeking damages from the Opera House Hotel, identified by the city as the source of a Legionnaires' disease outbreak that killed a dozen people and sickened 128 more.

He is also suing the hotel's corporate parent, the Empire Hotel Group LLC.

Personal injury attorney Ron Katter said he filed a case in Bronx Supreme Court on Aug. 20 -- the same day city officials declared the outbreak over -- on behalf of Leslie Noble, 56, a security guard who lives on Southern Boulevard in the borough.

She was infected with Legionnaires' and wound up spending almost a week in Mount Sinai Hospital in July.

Katter said he plans to file another case on behalf of a retired city worker who lives on East 147th Street by the end of the week. He has another two cases in the pipeline.

After an intensive investigation, city officials said the Legionella bacteria emanated from the rooftop cooling towers of the hotel, located at 436 E. 149th St. in the Bronx.

"Our tower was just two years old, has the most modern technology and our maintenance plan was consistent with the new regulations the City and State are just now putting into place," Michael McKeon, spokesman for the Opera House Hotel said in a statement. "We cooperated fully to resolve this matter and tests demonstrate our tank is clean. We have kept those impacted by the disease in our thoughts and prayers from day one, and have looked to be helpful to families where we can."

"We expect that some lawyers will attempt to cash in on this unfortunate event but we have lawyers to handle these matters, too," McKeon said.

Katter said all of his clients are residents of the area. According to the city Health Department, two of the 128 cases reported involved guests of the hotel.

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