**Outbreak closes fountain**

*Water in the Hubbard park attraction may be contaminated.*

By Susan Tom

Statesman Journal [Salem, Or] 02 Aug 2003: C.1.

HUBBARD - A popular splash fountain that draws children and families from nearby communities was closed by local health officials Friday because of an outbreak of a fecal bacteria.

Dr. Karen Landers, Marion County health officer, said that there are three confirmed cases of shigellosis, a highly infectious disease caused by a group of bacteria called shigella. There are eight more suspected cases. No one has been hospitalized.

Everyone who has come down with symptoms reported being at the splash fountain at Rivenes Park between July 21 and Friday. Test results of water samples taken from the fountain are expected back Monday.

"One of the biggest dangers now is the risk of secondary transmission," Landers said. "It is very easy to spread this infection from person to person. Good hand washing is the key."

The intestinal infection is usually caused by food or water contaminated by infected persons. Symptoms include fever, bloody diarrhea and abdominal cramps and usually occur one to four days after exposure. The infection is treatable with antibiotics.

The closure of the splash fountain comes just before another warm, dry weekend in the mid-Willamette Valley.

In the past weeks, children and adults sought relief from the scorching sun under the cool, choreographed jets of water. Salem hit a new daily temperature record of 101 degrees Tuesday.

The crowds mean more organic matter, such as sweat, leaves and grass, all of which uses up the chlorine at a faster rate.

Chlorine is added daily to the fountain, which uses city water. Unlike commercial pools, which must be licensed and inspected, there are no requirements for splash fountains, said Rick Sherman, a Marion County environmental health specialist.

Still, the city already had planned to install a new chlorinator complete with a pH meter and automatic chlorine dispenser on Tuesday.

"They already knew it needed improvement," Sherman said. "Unfortunately, it seems like they're a little late."

Last year, Marion County had 24 of the 106 shigellosis cases in Oregon, the highest of any county, according to the health department. There have been six cases as of Friday.

The splash fountain, which was built by the community in the late 90's, is on D Street between 4th and 5th streets in Hubbard, a town of about 2,600.

Joe Dryden, Hubbard fire chief, said that the splash fountain is a gathering place for residents.

"The whole community goes there to cool off during the day," Dryden said. "You can have hundreds of children there. It's a huge fountain."

The fountain, which officials closed shortly after 3 p.m., will remain closed until further notice. Meanwhile, those who want to cool off can go to the Woodburn city pool.

Jerry Huddleston, whose grandchildren have played at the fountain, said he's surprised by the outbreak, the first since the fountain was built.

"A lot of the kids are going to miss it," Huddleston said.

Susan Tom can be reached at (503) 399-6744 or stom@StatesmanJournal.com

Copyright 2003 - Statesman Journal Salem, OR - All Rights Reverved