



Public Health Delta & Menominee Counties



2920 College Avenue
Escanaba, Michigan 49829
Ph:(906)786-4111 - Fax:(906)786-7004

www.phdm.org

909 Tenth Avenue
Menominee, Michigan 49858
Ph:(906)863-4451 - Fax:(906) 863-7142

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TO: Media Partners
DATE: April 21, 2023
REGARDING: Blastomycosis Investigation Update
CONTACT: Michael Snyder, Health Officer

Blastomycosis Outbreak Investigation Update

Public Health Delta & Menominee Counties (PHDM) continues to work with Billerud Paper Mill, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to investigate an outbreak of blastomycosis, a fungal infection, associated with the Escanaba Billerud Paper Mill.

To date, there have been a total of 104 cases (confirmed and probable) of blastomycosis identified. A confirmed case is a person with symptoms of blastomycosis and where the fungus has either been grown (culture) or seen by microscope in a test specimen. A probable case is a person with symptoms of blastomycosis and who has a positive antigen or antibody test. PHDM will no longer be reporting the number of confirmed and probable cases separately, as all reported cases have a blastomycosis diagnosis.

Thirteen out of the 104 total cases have been hospitalized. All 104 of the cases are either employees, contractors or visitors of the Billerud Paper Mill in Escanaba. There has been one previously reported death associated with this outbreak.

Blastomycosis is a disease associated with a fungus that grows in moist soil and decomposing matter such as wood and leaves. People can get blastomycosis infection by breathing in fungal spores from the air. Blastomycosis does not spread from person to person or between animals and people.

Those who do get sick can develop symptoms such as cough (sometimes with blood), fever, chest pain, difficulty breathing, night sweats, fatigue, weight loss, muscle aches, and joint pain. Any persons experiencing these symptoms should contact their healthcare provider and discuss whether testing for blastomycosis is recommended. Blastomycosis is treatable with antifungal medicines, but it is important to get diagnosed early. Most people with blastomycosis will need treatment with prescription antifungal medication. Depending on the severity of the infection and the person's immune status, the course of treatment can range from six months to one year.

For more information, please visit the NIOSH website at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/newsroom/alerts/blastomycosisshhe.html>

Or the Billerud website at: <https://escanabamillinfo.com/>

###