

CAR WASH OUTBREAK

HOPPERS CROSSING, AUSTRALIA

Despite numerous reports by news agencies across Australia (including this article which warns readers to be wary of carwashes that use recycled water), the carwash involved in the Legionnaire's outbreak here does not have a reclaim system in use, according to the Australian Car Wash Association.

Instead, the ACWA has said the Legionella bacteria grew in the hot water storage tank at the carwash, which uses fresh water.

Health authorities are meeting with association and industry representatives to assess the safety of carwashes after eight people have been diagnosed with Legionnaire's disease, a potentially fatal sickness, after using the self-serve carwash. According to the report, it is believed to be the world's first outbreak caused by a carwash, although Professional Car washing & detailing reported in August 2007 of bus washing equipment causing the illness of two workers in Albany, NY. The May 22 story said the eight victims are believed to have used The Grand Car Wash over a period of five weeks.

Victoria's chief health officer, Dr John Carnie, said he was "extremely surprised" when water at the carwash tested positive for Legionella because it is usually only found in the cooling towers of buildings. "We have never had any outbreaks linked to a carwash, even though people knew this was theoretically possible." The Grand Car Wash has been closed until it is assessed to be safe enough to reopen.

This report was taken from "ABC News 21st May 08"

There has also been a reported case of a London Bus Wash in the UK some years ago.