

Local News in Reading

## Brother tells of death from Legionnaires



A MAN has been found dead at his home after contracting Legionnaires' Disease – the second DEFRA employee in three years.

Martin Licence, 36, was found at his council flat in Elizabeth House, Gosbrook Road, Caversham, on Friday, October 12.

Mr Licence, who worked at the Rural Payments Agency at DEFRA in King's Road, Reading, was reported missing to police on Thursday, October 4.

His brother Michael told the Evening Post Mr Licence thought he had 'flu-like symptoms he could shake off'.

He said the family were too shocked to think about the cause of his brother's death.

Friends became concerned after he pulled out of a medieval war games weekend.

His last known conversation had been to tell a friend on Thursday, October 4, he had "flu-like" symptoms he thought he could "shake off over the weekend," his brother Michael told the Evening Post yesterday.

Mr Licence is believed to have died between then and Friday, October 12.

During this time he failed to return phone calls from distraught family and friends or go to work.

A post-mortem examination carried out last week confirmed he died of pneumonia caused by legionella.

The post room clerk is the second DEFRA employee to die of Legionnaires' disease in just over three years.

Calcot man Mackenzie Hutt, who worked as a security guard at the same office, collapsed at work and was immediately admitted to the Royal Berkshire Hospital on June 22, 2004.

The 62-year-old's condition deteriorated and he died at the hospital a week later on July 1.

A spokesman for the Rural Payments Agency told the Evening Post yesterday "rigorous" tests are conducted up to 20 times a month.

He described the most recent test results on Monday as being over and above the Government's strict health and safety guidelines.

He said: "There is no evidence to suggest Legionnaires' disease came from here. The council's environment officers visited the offices again on Wednesday, and took further tests that we are waiting for."

Water storage systems at both the King's Road offices and Gosbrook Road have been checked and chlorinated as a precaution.

Council spokesman Oscar Mortali said: "The council has been informed of the death of a council tenant as a result of Legionnaires' disease.

"We would like to extend our sincere condolences to both family and friends."

Mr Mortali said there had been no other reported cases of legionella at Elizabeth House and the council would be carrying out tests on water storage systems there, although there was no evidence to suggest this was where he had contracted it from, and at Mr Licence's workplace.

Mr Licence's only sibling, Michael, 49, an engineer from West Reading, was at his brother's home moments after police discovered the body. Yesterday he was clearing the flat.

He said: "At the moment we are too shocked by his death to think about the cause.

"I am aware he is the second employee at the offices to have died from Legionnaires' disease.

"My brother had a number of hobbies and used to go out with friends over weekends quite a lot.

"We used to be members of the Reading Rifle and Pistol Club before it closed.

"When he was a junior at the club as a teenager, he was such a good target marksman he was given the opportunity to shoot for England.

"He hasn't got any children, but leaves a girlfriend who he had been seeing for about a year.

"He was heavily involved in medieval war game enactments and often went away at weekends to pursue his hobby.

"Mr Licence's funeral is due to be held at Reading Crematorium's South Chapel at 1.30pm on Thursday, November 1.

The council will be carrying out tests on water storage systems

*First printed in: Reading Evening Post*