

Norovirus Shuts Down Historic New York State Resort

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By JOANNA PRISCO via Good Morning America



A view of the Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, N.Y., in this Aug. 28, 2007 file photo.

Mike Groll/AP Photo

Cruise ships aren't the only venues in the travel industry susceptible to norovirus. A historic New York state resort has elected to shut down temporarily after an outbreak of an intestinal virus infected staff and hotel guests last week, resort officials said today.

"Mohonk Mountain House has been working closely with the Ulster County and New York State Departments of Health regarding a stomach virus reported by resort guests over the past several days," Katie Martello, a spokesperson for the resort, told ABC News. "To ensure the health and safety of our guests, we have engaged a company that is a global expert in this field to conduct a thorough sanitization of the entire resort, to include all public spaces, guest rooms, offices, staff areas, Conference House, and surrounding buildings."

Six samples collected from individuals at Mohonk Mountain House by the New York State Department of Health have since been confirmed as norovirus, officials said.

Symptoms of norovirus include nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, and diarrhea. The illness typically lasts for a few days but is not considered serious for the general population, a spokesperson for the Department of Health said.

"The virus, which is easily spread, is generally passed from person to person by direct contact and/or by touching contaminated surfaces or objects," he said. "Mohonk Mountain House has taken the proactive step to temporarily close their facilities."

After receiving multiple reports of illness from both guests and employees of the 145-year-old resort, owners issued a letter to employees on Feb. 7 announcing that they planned to close the property for a week for sanitization. WABC-TV printed a copy of that internal communication on its website.

The Smiley family, which has operated the resort since its founding in 1869, also released a statement on the Mohonk Mountain House Facebook page to alert guests to the situation.

"Although it has not been required of us, we have chosen to close for seven days because the health and well-being of our guests and staff are our top priorities," read the post. "We are grateful for the support of you, our Mohonk friends. We will look forward to reopening and welcoming guests again starting Friday, February 14."

The closure of Mohonk Mountain House is the latest in a series of health snafus in the travel industry. In January, a Royal Caribbean cruise returned to port early after an outbreak caused 630 passengers to get ill. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has since determined that a new Sydney strain of norovirus was responsible for the widespread illness.

While representatives for Mohonk Mountain House would not share the name of the company they are working with to sanitize the resort, their spokesperson did share that the expert "has conducted successful remediation work on hospitals, schools and libraries, and on projects as large as a 44-acre University campus after Hurricane Katrina."

Frequent, thorough hand washing and cleaning of potentially contaminated surfaces can also help protect against transmission, according to the state Health Department.

SOURCE: <http://abcnews.go.com/Travel/virus-shuts-historic-york-state-resort/story?id=22446268>