Two Deaths Linked to Hepatitis A Outbreak in Hawaii

November 3, 2016

The Hawaii Department of Health has confirmed two deaths in the midst of a state-wide outbreak of hepatitis A virus (HAV). In addition, 291 people have been infected with the viral liver disease, 73 of whom had to be hospitalized due to the severity of their illness, Food Safety News reports.

The outbreak, which began in June 2016, was linked in August to a bad batch of frozen scallops imported from the Philippines and served raw at sushi restaurants on the islands of Oahu and Kauai. Several related illnesses were also reported in Nevada and California.

Last week, a spokesman for the Hawaii Department of Health confirmed that a woman in her sixties developed liver failure after eating at one of the restaurants and died after developing several complications from the condition. In September, a Seattle-based attorney filed a class action lawsuit on behalf of the dead woman's family and 75 other outbreak victims. The suit names as defendants Genki Sushi (the Hawaiian restaurant chain that served the infected seafood) as well as Koha Foods and Sea Port Products, which transported and distributed the scallops.

The state's second outbreak-related death was only partially attributed to the victim's hepatitis A infection, as the person was also terminally ill and in hospice care.

State health authorities in Hawaii are assuring people that all affected scallops have been removed from restaurant repositories since early August and that reports of new illnesses have been slowing down in recent weeks. The latest case in the HAV outbreak is a person who became ill on October 9.

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