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Cause of salmonella in Gaston Co. still being investigated

Officials investigating Gaston Co. Salmonella outbreak

By Ken Lemon

GASTON COUNTY —

More than 400 people attended a four-day conference at Living Word Tabernacle near Bessemer City that ended Oct. 5.

Fifty-five people got sick after eating potluck meals served at the church. Seven of them tested positive for salmonella poisoning and two of them were hospitalized. All of them seem to be doing fine Wednesday. Health officials said the state lab is processing tests on more people who got sick in the outbreak.

During a news conference Wednesday, Chris Dobbins, Gaston County's director of Health and Human Services, said, "Our process is prepare for the worst and hope for the best."

Dobbins said there were so many meals served during the conference that tracking the cause of the salmonella outbreak would be difficult.

"Just a number of what we would consider high-risk food products if they are not properly prepared or properly stored," said Dobbins.

He said they are hoping to hear from more people who got sick. Their experiences could tell health inspectors a lot.

"Getting more information to help us maybe zero in on a cause," he said.

Church leaders are cooperating with health officials. Dobbins said they are not looking to blame someone. They just hope to gain information to help food prepares at other churches like Teresa Crosby. She said members of her church rely on pot luck meals.

"It's kind of scary," said Crosby. "You know you still got to be careful."

Health officials said more churches should follow the lead of Flint Groves Baptist Church. They bring in caterers for most meals and the Health Department checks their kitchen once a year. The Health Department wants to make reconditions to churches on how to avoid a salmonella outbreak once inspectors have finished their investigation.

Source: <http://www.wsocv.com/news/news/officials-investigating-gaston-co-salmonella-outbr/nhjGG/>