

OUTBREAK: Central and Southside Virginia have seen reported cases

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cups, water bottles, eating utensils and cigarettes. And these people may not even know they're infected. "This bacterium can be commonly found in the nose and throat of people without causing disease," VDH officials said in a statement. "Symptoms can first appear flu-like and may quickly become more

severe." As for what those symptoms are, they include fever, chills, a headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to bright light and possibly a rash.

WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

So now that we know what it is and how it infects people, the question is where did it come from. The first reported cases of this situation came

in September 2022, when a regional outbreak hit Norfolk and Hampton Roads. Those infections started spreading east, with cases popping up in the Central Region soon after. A lack of vaccinations looks to have played a part in this as well. Twenty-six of the 27 infected patients, VDH officials found, had not been vaccinated for meningitis. In the Virginia cases, most of

those infected are Black adults between the ages of 30 to 60. The VDH statement also pointed out that several groups of people are at increased risk of falling victim to the outbreak. That includes first-year college students living in residential housing, people with a damaged spleen or whose spleen has been removed, U.S. military recruits and anyone who has traveled

to sub-Saharan Africa, where meningococcal disease is common. And of course, anyone who lives with anybody that classifies as being on this risk list is at risk as well. As for how to avoid it? VDH suggests that you don't share personal items like toothbrushes, lipstick or vapes. Also, try to avoid close contact with anyone who is coughing or appears to be sick.

BERRY: Mistake kept candidate off ballot

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to the State Board of Elections to no avail.

WHAT HAPPENED

In a letter to the State Board of Elections, Berry's attorney Liz Burneson, said that local Democratic Party officials had given her assurances on April 3 that all the required paperwork for her candidacy would be submitted. However, Berry said she became aware of the party officials' error on July 13 after the April 11 deadline for the document filing. According to Berry, she was the only Democratic

candidate who filed all the necessary paperwork in her district, which under normal circumstances would have automatically made her the Democratic nominee.

However, Clem Oliver, a Danville Democratic leader who passed away last month after battling cancer, mistyped an email address when she attempted to file essential paperwork with the state officially declaring Berry the Democratic candidate.

"Because of a three-letter typo made by a woman who was gravely ill," Burneson said. "That's really an unconscionable result. And this board has the authority to avoid this unconscionable result."

In emails to the Republican-controlled State Board of Elections, Berry has pointed out that the elections board gave other candidates consideration for mistakes outside of their direct control.

In 2019, the board allowed House Majority Leader Terry Kilgore, R-Scott, and Del. Clint Jenkins, D-Suffolk, to appear on the ballot after similar paperwork flubs by local party officials. In 2021, Del. Dave LaRock, R-Loudoun, received similarly lenient treatment from the board.

Berry said the same should be given to her. The decisions made in those cases occurred under Democratic-controlled boards.

MINING: Chairman says work will mix with comprehensive plan

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and recommend a path forward, in terms of any changes needed for local

rules and regulations. To help with that, the commission wanted to hear from state agencies, and possibly convince

the General Assembly to separate metal mining from non-metal mining.

So far, no Assembly member has been willing to have that discussion, about putting a metallic mining ban in place across Virginia.

"It'll never happen," Kapuscinski said. "It's my opinion that will never happen."

WHERE IS MINING ALLOWED?

Currently in Buckingham County, mining is allowed in two districts. In Buckingham's zoning, manufacturing districts

are labeled as M-1 or M-2. In the M-1 districts, commercial core drilling is allowed by right. That means a company can drill without requesting a special use permit. Mining of any type is also allowed in the M-1 district by permit, which means the company comes before the Buckingham planning commission and supervisors and makes the request. In the M-2 district, mining is just allowed, with no permit needed.

Buckingham has two areas right now where that's in effect. One is on

Route 15 and the surrounding area near Dillwyn, where the Kyanite Mining Corporation is working. The second is also on Route 15, just off Bridgeport Road in the Slate Quarry area. There is no metallic mining happening in either area.

SO WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

This summer, Buckingham County Attorney E.M. Wright told the commission he saw four options for them. They could recommend a mining ban. They could just ban metallic min-

ing. They could adjust current ordinance or do nothing at all. The group decided to basically take option four at the time, with any changes coming during the update to the county's comprehensive plan, which determines what is allowed in each zoning district.

"For right now, we're just gonna continue with the comprehensive plan," Bickford said. "In the interim, we're just gonna work on the comprehensive plan until we get to that phase and we'll have to work on it then."

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