

- UW-Extension Conference Centers received reports of illness by some people who used our facilities during the week of October 31, 2011. With the health and safety of our clients and staff the very highest priority, we reported this immediately to UW Environmental Health & Services (UHS) and worked closely with them and Public Health – Madison & Dane County to determine the source of the illness. We immediately took a number of steps as recommended by the health authorities to minimize illness spread, to ensure the continued health and safety of all our employees and customers.
- The health authorities confirmed that the source of the illness was a highly contagious virus called norovirus.
- We have now received the final report from Public Health – Madison and Dane County that also confirms the ***source of the norovirus was likely a member of a group who used our facilities***. It spread to others by person-to-person contact, environmental contamination of common surfaces, and contamination and food and/or beverage items or serving utensils by ill individuals.
- The report summary said, *“there was little the Pyle Center could have done to prevent this outbreak.”*
- According to the report, initial prevention of norovirus spread occurs mostly at the individual level, with symptomatic people choosing to isolate themselves and practicing exceptional hand washing. As a conferencing center that welcomes hundreds to thousands of people each week, we encourage all our guests to practice habits that can help minimize illness.
- Once the presence of the virus was known, staff increased cleaning of surfaces at The Pyle and Lowell centers to prevent further environmental transmission. All high contact areas have been thoroughly cleaned and will continue to be on a frequent rotation. These areas include restroom door handles, elevator buttons, handrails, service counters and any other areas where customers and/or staff frequently make hand contact.
 - Housekeepers at The Lowell Center also wear gloves while working in guestrooms, and wash their hands before leaving. They are making sure to clean any surfaces in the guestrooms that are likely to have hand contact by guests such as the telephones, remote controls and dresser drawers.
- For more information, including media inquiries, please contact Sheri Rice, APR, Marketing Director at UW-ECC at 608-890-0392 or sheri.rice@ecc.uwex.edu.