

6 fired for bungling response to TB

Six officials in Hunan province have been fired for their handling of two tuberculosis outbreaks in their county.

Zhou Desheng, chief of Taojiang county's health and family planning commission; Huang Zhigang, chief of the bureau of education; and Wen Fuqiang, chief of the center for disease control and prevention, were among the six fired on Tuesday, a statement from the county government said.

Meanwhile, the local government suggested the county's education commission remove the principal of Taojiang No 4 Middle School for failing to effectively cope with the public health incident.

A total of 29 students from the school had been diagnosed with tuberculosis as of Friday.

As of Friday, 37 students from two schools been diagnosed in Taojiang county, the county government said.

The eight additional cases were confirmed at Taojiang Occupational Middle School. The first was discovered in October, the statement said.

The county government will continue its investigation and punish violations such as dereliction of duty, it said.

The county will treat infected students and monitor and test those who had close contact with them, it said.

The outbreak at Taojiang No 4 Middle School, which occurred in August, was confirmed by the Taojiang government on Thursday.

It said the government immediately carried out an emergency response plan after the outbreak and reported the incident to the CDC in Yiyang – which governs the county – and to the Hunan provincial CDC.

On Monday, the Hunan Health and Family Planning Commission said eight students at Taojiang Occupational Middle School in Taojiang had been diagnosed with tuberculosis. The first case at the school was confirmed by the county CDC on Oct 12, the commission said.

Wang Jianguo, deputy head of the county, was quoted by CCTV as saying the initial investigations showed the two outbreaks to be unrelated, as the two schools are nearly 40 kilometers away from each other and their students did not have close contact.

Three male students from a senior class at Taojiang No 4 Middle School were asked to leave school on Aug 6 because of TB. Other students in the class developed coughs over the next few days and asked to be checked, according to Beijing Youth Daily.

The three males had been taking medications for months, but the other students had no idea what diseases they had, the report said, quoting students in the class.

The school began sterilization measures in its classrooms around Aug 8, and it organized a blood test covering all students in the senior class on Aug 10. Seven more students were diagnosed and asked to leave school, the report said.

Employers must report confirmed or suspected cases of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis to local centers for disease control or to medical institutions in a timely manner, according to China's Law on Infectious Disease Control and Prevention.

Government officials who conceal or delay reporting outbreaks of infectious diseases, or who do not take timely measures, face administrative or criminal punishment if serious consequences occur, according to the law.