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Riverside County health officials looking for cause of sickness for dozens of people after meal

Riverside County health officials are trying to find out why dozens of employees of a shuttle bus company became ill after eating a catered meal for hundreds of people.

More than 40 people were taken to three hospitals in the Coachella Valley early Monday after they complained of various symptoms, including stomach cramps, dizziness, nausea, and diarrhea, after eating dinner that was catered for employees of a transportation company that provided shuttle service for the Coachella Music Festival. A handful of patients were admitted to hospitals Monday.

Investigators with the Riverside County departments of public health and environmental health are collaborating to determine what caused people to become ill and find out how many people were affected. They hope to quickly speak to as many people as possible who attended the dinner – those who got sick and those who didn't – to narrow down the cause.

Many of those who got sick live outside Riverside County and may have sought medical care from a hospital or medical provider in another jurisdiction. Riverside County officials have alerted local health jurisdictions throughout Southern California and the California Department of Public Health about the incident so potential patients can be interviewed.

“This could involve hundreds of interviews, but it is important to gather as much information as possible so that we can determine what happened and try to prevent it from happening again,” said Kim Saruwatari, director of Riverside County Public Health.

Officials emphasized that it does not appear any attendees of the music festival were affected.

Those who attended the dinner, whether they became ill or not, can call a Public Health representative for an interview at 951-358-5107.