Beat: News

Guests at LA hotel drank from water tank containing woman`s body

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USPA News - Guests who were staying at a hotel in Los Angeles have reacted with shock after they discovered they drank, bathed and brushed their teeth with water from a tank in which authorities have found the decomposing body of a young Canadian woman. The body of 21-year-old Elisa Lam was found at around 10 a.m. local time on Tuesday inside the rooftop water tank at the Cecil Hotel in downtown Los Angeles.

The gruesome discovery was made by a maintenance worker who went up there to investigate guest complaints about low water pressure. But guests at the hotel were left horrified on Wednesday when they learned they had been drinking and using water from the same tank in which Lam`s decomposing body was found. The young woman from Vancouver, B.C., had gone missing on January 31 after traveling to California on her own. "It tasted horrible. It had a very funny, sweetening, disgusting taste. It`s a very strange taste, I can barely describe it," British tourist Sabina Baugh, who had been using the water for eight days, told CNN. "We never thought anything of it. We thought it was just the way it was here." Besides low water pressure, guests at the hotel also described the water turning black at times. "The shower was awful. When you turned the tap on, the water was coming black first for two seconds and then it was going back to normal," added Baugh. "It made me feel really sick yesterday until now, knowing that we`ve been drinking this water for eight days." The Cecil Hotel, which remains open but has been placed on a flush-only order, informed guests on Wednesday about what it described as an "unexpected emergency health and safety condition." A letter handed out to guests said there would be no drinking water or water suitable for any purpose for up to 4 days. The letter called on guests to vacate the premises immediately and promised them alternative comparable lodging, but guests were told they would not receive a refund if they left the hotel. Other guests who chose to stay were told to sign a legal agreement which releases the company of legal liability. "Under no circumstances should you drink or use any water at the hotel until further notice," the letter to guests said. "Should you remain on the Premises, you do so at your own risk and peril. You are assuming the risk of serious injury or illness should you refuse to vacate the Premises." The Los Angeles Public Health Department said Wednesday it has taken samples from the water tank and is awaiting the results to determine whether the water presented any health risks to those who used it. Results from the tests are expected to be made public as early as Thursday. Meanwhile, the cause of Lam`s death remains unclear but investigators are considering the possibility of foul play because of where her body was found. Police previously released hotel surveillance footage which showed Lam acting bizarrely inside an elevator, including hiding in the corner of the elevator and looking in both directions when sticking her head out of the doors.

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