
From: Holton, Jennifer (MDARD)
Sent: Friday, October 02, 2015 8:42 PM
To: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ)
Subject: MIRS story

State Plan For Flint Water Includes More Testing, \$1 Million For Filters

(FLINT) -- State and local officials today rolled out a plan to tackle growing concerns over Flint's water supply, acknowledging that some residents with lead pipes are at risk -- but they stopped short of saying the switch from Detroit water to Flint River water played a role.

During a news conference at the Kettering University Innovation Center in Flint, the state's top health and environment officials contended the water leaving Flint's drinking water system is safe, but that those whose homes or service areas have lead pipes could be experiencing higher lead levels.

The plan hopes to attack the issue from several angles -- offering free water testing for Flint area schools and residents, setting aside \$1 million in state funds for water filters, expediting the completion of the Karegnondi Water Authority line and speeding up corrosion control and improvement efforts in the drinking water system and the pipes that carry it, among other administrative efforts.

The hope is that the plan will appease growing calls for action after a new wave of criticism was directed at state and federal agencies for its response, or lack thereof, to problems since the city's water shift from Detroit's water supply to the Flint River in 2014 while the Karegnondi Water Authority line is completed.

"We understand many have lost confidence in the drinking water," said Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Director Dan WYANT. "But we need to build that back. And we need to do more.

"We don't think we're going to have an issue in the majority of homes, but where you have a lead service line, this issue is serious and this issue is real," he later continued.

It could prove difficult for state officials to restore that confidence, however, as longstanding concerns from residents over the quality of their water supply has reached a fever pitch.

For months, residents have complained of a foul odor and reddish discoloration in their water supply. Researchers from Virginia Tech and the Hurley Medical Center in Flint have also found significant reasons for concern on both the environmental and health fronts.

The most recent study published by Hurley physicians found lead levels for children in the city have doubled in high risk areas, while Virginia Tech professors have determined the Flint River is so corrosive that state officials should have known the switch would result in lead issues (See "State Tries To Soothe Growing Alarm Over Flint Water" and "Funding Placeholder For Flint Water Supply Added In Senate," 10/1/15)

Just outside today's press conference, a group of protesters -- a few of whom were dressed in bright yellow hazmat suits and carrying shovels and pitchforks -- chanted, "Tell the truth! Tell the truth!"

Several advocates of changing the Flint water system, including Senate Minority Leader Jim ANANICH (D-Flint), said the announcement was a first step, but by no means should be the end of the discussion.

Ananich said his first priority is to ensure residents of his district are on a safe source of water, which means moving off of the Flint River system as soon as possible -- the water filters are merely a temporary fix to a long-term problem, he said.

That could mean additional state resources, Ananich said, but comparing the potential costs of switching back to the Detroit system to "potential brain damage to children is unacceptable to me."

He said he fully intends on finding out how Flint residents ended up in this situation in the first place and had a warning for anyone who may have failed to address the problem adequately on the front end.

"If I find out myself -- I can't answer for anybody else -- that there was people that were negligent, that knew this was a problem and didn't deal with it, they can pray to the Lord for mercy, because they're not going to get it from me," Ananich said.

Although the plan currently does not include a means to switch off of Flint River water, Wyant said Gov. Rick **SNYDER** remains open to that idea. But he argued switching water would not necessarily make the issues disappear.

"Whether the water comes from Detroit or whether the water comes from the river, we still have the same issue," he said.

And Nick **LYON**, director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, said the state and federal agencies followed protocol and responded when additional information was brought forward.

"For me, this worked the way it should have worked," he said. "Something was brought to our attention, we scientifically verified it, we had an epidemiologist look at it -- now we're reacting to it."

U.S. Rep. Dan **KILDEE** (D-Flint) also weighed in, noting that corrosion control needs to be a top priority and added that all parties involved should "adopt a greater sense of urgency than I've seen demonstrated thus far."

"Specifically, corrosion control needs to be started now. To date, corrosion control treatment has not been started in the Flint water system," he said in a statement. "Delaying corrosion control treatment will only delay improving the water quality."

Wyant said during the press conference that corrosion control in the city had been used prior to the plan's announcement, but that it would be increased as part of the plan moving forward.

Sierra Club Michigan suggested an independent investigation be completed to find out if state officials erred in any of their previous judgments on the situation.

"The governor, finally, is assuming direct responsibility for responding to a crisis that every day is damaging the health of Flint's children," Sierra Club Michigan Chair David **HOLTZ** said in a statement. "His actions should be much stronger, however, and he needs to find out how we got to the point where Flint children are drinking lead and what the MDEQ's role was in those decisions and actions."

Sent from my iPhone