
From: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ)
Sent: Thursday, September 11, 2014 4:22 PM
To: Stephen Carmody (sgcarmod@umich.edu)
Subject: RE: drilling protest

It's an interesting question, but I can't really think of a way to offer apples-to-apples for the answer. Boil water advisories happen around the state every month for a variety of causes. There are actually a lot more of them than one might think, but they're meant to be seen as proof the monitoring system is effective and erring on the side of caution in protecting local drinking water.

Remember a boil advisory doesn't mean that the water is automatically dangerous to consume – in those cases, the operator issues a 'do not use' order. Boil advisories mean a system has elevated one of many potential risk factors (most common being E. Coli) beyond set (conservative) standards, so there's a higher-than-normal risk level.

Remember that this world is about statistical probability and risk management. The testing and monitoring protocols are designed to offer an exceptionally high degree of confidence in water supplies. The water testing thresholds are designed to alert operators very early about the need to make systematic adjustments.

Regular testing of municipal drinking water systems is done to keep a careful eye on drinking water supplies. Flint's latest advisory only affected a portion of its distribution system. This was Flint's second advisory since switching their system in May. That's two more than some communities, of course, but I'm not sure how much hay one could make out of it just yet.

Does it mean you're guaranteed to get sick if you drink water while it's under a boil advisory? No. It means the normal risk from municipal drinking water is infinitesimally minute, and something was detected in the monitoring that elevated that risk.

b

From: Stephen Carmody [<mailto:sgcarmod@umich.edu>]
Sent: Thursday, September 11, 2014 12:17 PM
To: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ)
Subject: Re: drilling protest

Brad,

Story long filed. I used a quote from a story we did recently on the subject.

On a different topic, I'm wondering how the number of 'boil water' advisories the Flint water system has issued since they switched over from DWSD to the Flint river compares with other Michigan communities.

Any thoughts?

Steve Carmody
 Michigan Radio

On Thu, Sep 11, 2014 at 12:08 PM, Wurfel, Brad (DEQ) <WurfelB@michigan.gov> wrote:

Steve, sorry I missed this email! Was flying back from Portland Oregon when you sent this. Apologies.

I've got plenty to say about this issue, actually. If you haven't filed yet, let me know and I'll be happy to discuss with you. If you've already filed, and I'm guessing that's the case, apologies for missing you.

b

From: Stephen Carmody [mailto:sgcarmod@umich.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, September 09, 2014 1:01 PM
To: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ)
Subject: drilling protest

Brad,

I've been talking to people at the state capitol today complaining about state laws that prevent local townships from blocking oil drilling.

They've had many complaints about the DEQ. In particular, they say the DEQ is more interested in helping the oil and gas industry than protecting local people.

Does the DEQ have any comment on the complaints or on the job it does handling the oil and gas industry?

Steve Carmody

Michigan Radio