
From: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ)
Sent: Sunday, October 18, 2015 1:47 PM
To: Wyant, Dan (DEQ)
Subject: Read.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Lynch, James" <JLynch@detroitnews.com>
Date: October 18, 2015 at 12:27:10 PM EDT
To: "Wurfel, Brad (DEQ)" <WurfelB@michigan.gov>
Subject: Questions

Brad,

After reviewing the emails made available through FOIA, there are several things that seem to need addressing.

1. It appears DEQ staffers have essentially downplayed or ignored warning signs from EPA's water expert, Miguel Deltoral. We have been aware of Mr. Deltoral's unofficial memo that went public in April. But his email dated two months earlier on Feb. 27, to Jennifer Crooks and Mike Prysby, he seems to lay out exactly what's come to pass...

"(Particulate lead readings) Folks tend to discount these values as anomalies, but particulate lead release is a normal part of the corrosion process and it is universal (common) in all systems. It's just that it's not captured as often by the infrequent LCR sampling. If systems are pre-flushing the tap the night before collecting LCR compliance samples (MDEQ still provides these instructions to public water systems) this clears particulate lead out of the plumbing and biases the results low by eliminating the highest lead values. If systems are pre-flushing and still finding particulate lead, the amount of particulate lead in the system can be higher than what is being detected using these "pre-flushed" first-draw samples.

"My point on that was that people are exposed to the particulate lead on a daily basis, but the particulate lead is being flushed away before collecting compliance samples which provides false assurance to residents about the true lead levels in the water."

Miguel goes on to address the optimal corrosion control situation in that same Feb 27 email.

"If I remember correctly, Detroit is feeding (phosphate) for the lead/copper rule, but since Flint is no longer part of that interconnection, I was wondering what their OCCT was. They are required to have OCCT in place which is why I was asking what they were using."

So what I'm seeing here is Miguel having raised these issues as far back as February. When unofficial April memo shows up, it's clear these issues still haven't been addressed.

Another email from the day before came from Jennifer Crooks at EPA which also highlights early concern about a lack of proper corrosion controls as well as the testing methods.

"The City can't just flush in advance of taking the compliance samples, they have to flush the lines on a regular basis."

Can you respond to the fact that it appears the state ignored or disregarded several warnings from EPA officials about testing deficiencies and insufficient corrosion controls?

2. Corrosion control, or the lack thereof, seems to be another major problem here. At the first of the recent press conferences, Dan Wyant said that lime was being used as a corrosion control method. But that is clearly contradicted by DEQ staff at several points. One of those is Pat Cook's email from April 24.

"Flint is currently not practicing corrosion control treatment at the (water treatment plant)." This puts Dan's comments about the lime into question.

3. I gather from several exchanges in here that EPA and DEQ disagree over that the state's responsibility was in ensuring there was optimal corrosion control. One of the emails from July includes notes from a meeting of all the parties shows that EPA was asking why that hadn't been used from the outset, and the state's response was something along these lines:

"MDEQ explained that they did not treat the switch to Flint River water as a "new system," but as a new source. It is their understanding that two rounds of 6-month testing is still needed to characterize the water quality. They don't know what optimized is until those two rounds of six month monitoring are completed."

Under the lead copper rule, was the state required to have phosphate treatment in place? It appears here that the state chose to interpret the CLR as not requiring corrosion control. That seems like a highly dubious conclusion.

And after concerns were raised repeatedly beginning (at least as early as February), why was nothing done?

4. Another area of concern, one I mentioned on the phone, is the pace of response. And I understand that the lead copper rule lays out response times. But you have concerns being raised about lead by an EPA expert as far back as February. The state's response, in several instances, is that federal guidelines give us two six-month periods to collect samples, and then more time to submit an action plan, and then a year or more to enact that plan.

While those delays in making a change may be permitted under the law, given that we're talking about a possible public health crisis, why wasn't there more expediency? The responses in these emails appear to be without any sense of urgency at a time when Flint residents may have been drinking dangerous water.

5. At many points along the way, serious concerns are made about the state's testing methods. The Virginia Tech results were not the first time someone had indicated state testing – as approved by federal guidelines – might not be giving accurate readings.

Miguel's April memo reads: "I wanted to follow up on this because Flint has essentially not been using any corrosion control treatment since April 30, 2014 and they have (lead

service lines). Given the very high lead levels found at one home and the pre-flushing happening in Flint, I'm worried that the whole town may have much higher lead levels than the compliance results indicated, since they are using pre-flushing ahead of their compliance sampling."