
From: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ)
Sent: Thursday, September 03, 2015 12:28 PM
To: Wurfel, Sara (GOV); Murray, David (GOV)
Subject: FW: lead in flint water

From: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ)
Sent: Wednesday, September 02, 2015 3:28 PM
To: 'Ronald Fonger'
Subject: RE: lead in flint water

Here's a response from the DEQ. Attribute to me. Call me if you have further questions. Thanks, Ron.
b

Brad Wurfel
Communications Director
Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
517-284-6713

PPI cell

We are aware that Virginia Tech researchers are now testing water at various Flint homes for lead levels. We appreciate that Virginia Tech's team is working on this issue because it brings the public spotlight on an important fact: if you have lead water pipes or plumbing fixtures containing lead in your home, or a lead service connection to the city system, it is very likely you are ingesting some level of lead. That's just a fact. It's true whether you live in Detroit, Dowagiac or Decatur.

And in the City of Flint, that fact affects 15,000 or more residences.

However, we want to be very clear that the lead levels being detected in Flint drinking water are not coming from the treatment plant or the city's transmission lines. Treated water leaving the plant has no detectable levels of lead in it. The issue is how, whether, and to what extent the drinking water is interacting with lead plumbing in people's homes.

It does not appear the Virginia Tech research lab is certified, and we can't speak to the sampling methods being employed to achieve these results. The results reported so far fail to track with any of the lead sampling conducted by the city. In addition, the Virginia Tech results are not reflected by the blood lead level testing regularly conducted by the state department of community health that have not shown any change since Flint switched sources.

The state's compliance monitoring program requires the city to use certified laboratories and a standardized, federal testing protocol that looks specifically at the homes in communities most likely to experience lead problems. The latest results from Flint, obtained from two separate rounds of testing over the past year, indicated that Flint drinking water, meets state and federal safe drinking water standards for lead.

That said, the state has requested Flint to 'optimize' its water treatment to further limit exposure to lead from plumbing in homes. While statute allows several years for a drinking water system to actually undertake this process – Detroit took five years to complete its water optimization work – we are encouraging Flint water system operators to take these steps immediately and we are encouraged by the conversation so far.

Any resident who has concerns about lead in their drinking water should have their water tested at a certified laboratory and get professional consultation on how to address it. The leading cause of lead poisoning is known to be lead paint and, in some areas, environmental legacy hot spots where lead is present in soils. However, I will say it again: when homes are fitted with lead plumbing or plumbing fixtures containing lead, homeowners should assume there is some varied level of interaction between water and pipes that results in lead exposure.

b

From: Ronald Fonger [mailto:RFONGER1@mlive.com]
Sent: Wednesday, September 02, 2015 11:40 AM
To: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ)
Subject: RE: lead in flint water

Brad:
If needed, here is the link to what's been posted today.
I spoke with Dr. Marc Edwards, who is overseeing the research.
<http://flintwaterstudy.org/>

Ron Fonger
MLive Media Group
Reporter

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From: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ) [mailto:WurfelB@michigan.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, September 02, 2015 11:37 AM
To: Ronald Fonger
Subject: RE: lead in flint water

Ron, thank you for reaching out. We definitely want to clarify some important points here. Give me a few to read this and pull together some stuff for you.

Again, THANKS!!!

b

From: Ronald Fonger [<mailto:RFONGER1@mlive.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, September 02, 2015 11:34 AM
To: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ)
Cc: Kristin Longley; Bryn Mickle
Subject: lead in flint water

Brad:

I left a message with Mike Prysby on Tuesday, Sept. 1, but wanted to reach out to you also because of stories we are working on about the extent to which lead is becoming an issue in Flint drinking water.

Today, Sept. 2, researchers at Virginia Tech posted the results on an experiment with Flint water online. The report concludes that Flint River water leaches much more lead from plumbing than does Detroit.

"On average, Detroit water is 12 times (or 12X) less corrosive than the Flint River water currently in use ... This is creating a public health threat in some Flint homes that have lead pipe or lead solder," the report says.

An earlier post by the same researchers says that initial water tests show "a serious lead in water problem" in Flint, partly because Flint River water is so corrosive to pipes.

Given the state's role in oversight of the city's drinking water system through DEQ and its overall oversight by state emergency managers during the past several years, I wanted to make sure I'm reaching out to the right person to respond to this information.

Could you let me know who that is?

I expect to post the first story about the experiment today and expect the issue will be getting more attention as the VT study of 300 water test kits from Flint is completed.

Thanks,

Ron Fonger
MLive Media Group
Reporter

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