

From: [Wurfel, Brad \(DEQ\)](#)  
To: [Busch, Stephen \(DEQ\)](#); [Shekter-Smith, Liane \(DEQ\)](#); [Benzie, Richard \(DEQ\)](#); [Prybyl, Mike \(DEQ\)](#)  
Subject: DRAFT Flint Journal response -- edit, add and subtract from this as you see fit. Need it asap. Thanks!  
Date: Wednesday, September 02, 2015 12:12:06 PM

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We are aware that Virginia Tech researchers are now testing water at various Flint homes for lead levels in their plumbing.

First, we want to be very clear that the lead issue in Flint, to the extent there is one, is not from the source water or the plant or even the transmission lines. The river has no detectable levels of lead in it, and treated water from the plant has not detectable levels of lead in it. The issue is how, whether, and to what extent the water is interacting with lead plumbing in people's homes.

It does not appear their research lab is certified, and we can't speak to the whatever sampling methods are being employed to achieve these results. The results reported so far fail to track with any of the lead sampling done by the DEQ for the past 25 years (since 1991), or the blood lead levels testing regularly conducted by the state department of community health. That said, we do 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 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, and in the City of Flint that fact affects 15,000 or more residences.

The state's monitoring program, which uses certified laboratories and a standardized, federal testing protocol, looks specifically at the homes in communities most likely to experience lead problems. Our results, obtained from two separate rounds of testing over the past year, concluded that the mean average of lead in Flint drinking water, meets state and federal safe drinking water standards.

That said, the state is pushing Flint to 'optimize' its water, which means addressing additives that can minimize the extent to which the water interacts with lead plumbing in homes. While statute allows several years for an operator 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 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 pipes, homeowners should assume there is some varied level of interaction between water and pipes that means exposure.

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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