

Rennaker, Joanne (DEQ)

From: Benzie, Richard (DEQ)
Sent: Monday, February 09, 2015 1:57 PM
To: Crooks, Jennifer; Prysby, Mike (DEQ); Busch, Stephen (DEQ)
Subject: RE: question on flushing/water rates in MI

There currently is no regulatory oversight of rates in Michigan.

But be careful about saying residents aren't paying for water used for flushing – as the overall costs of operating the water system have to be reflected in the revenue stream somewhere. The rates probably reflect the cost of producing "lost" water, just not in an accountable manner. If you say they are paying for it (even directly), it may still generate a negative reaction if they realize the costs are "hidden" and being borne by all customers.

From: Crooks, Jennifer [mailto:crooks.jennifer@epa.gov]
Sent: Monday, February 09, 2015 12:12 PM
To: Benzie, Richard (DEQ); Prysby, Mike (DEQ); Busch, Stephen (DEQ)
Subject: question on flushing/water rates in MI

Richard—I have a couple of questions for you regarding the citizen complaint on Flint, that I'm responding to.

Regarding the water rates part of this email, "Flint river runs right through the city of Flint. They have been opening the hydrants and letting water pour out of them to "purge" the system, **then charging consumers double for their mistake**"

I was going to remind the citizen that they are only charged based upon what the water meter reads at individual connection (home). The citizens aren't directly paying for what is being flushed. I was going to say that the flushing program removes stagnant water in the system, which can increase levels of trihalomethanes and increase bacteria growth, among other activities.

Also, who regulates water rates in Michigan? I don't think MI has a rate commission, right? Any oversight on individual water supply rates?

Jennifer

From: Crooks, Jennifer
Sent: Monday, February 09, 2015 8:22 AM
To: Richard Benzie; Prysby, Mike (DEQ); Busch, Stephen (DEQ)
Subject: FYI: (CWA - FY15-124819-3709-CV) Referred to Region - Michigan

Forgot to cc you all. Jen

From: Crooks, Jennifer
Sent: Monday, February 09, 2015 8:09 AM
To: Dee, Rhiannon
Cc: Poy, Thomas
Subject: RE: (CWA - FY15-124819-3709-CV) Referred to Region - Michigan

Rhiannon—Let me tell you, this Flint situation is a nasty issue—I've had people call me 4 letter words over the phone, yell at me, and call me a crook—yes, the last one was a play on my last name—I didn't think it was funny, though I'm developing a thick skin ☺.

I can respond to the Flint drinking water issue, and the water rate issue, and refer them back to the State if they have further questions. But I cannot respond to the sewerage dump (who receives the report when there is a sewer overflow?) or the chemical—though Richard is probably right—the ‘toxic chemical’ is probably chlorine—and that’s what I’ll say in my response. One citizen was confused about ‘chlorides’ being ‘chlorine’....

Let me know if you would like me to respond to this citizen complaint as I explained above.

Jennifer

From: Dee, Rhiannon

Sent: Friday, February 06, 2015 10:50 AM

To: Benzie, Richard (DEQ)

Cc: ostlundp@michigan.gov; Busch, Stephen (DEQ); Prysby, Mike (DEQ); Crooks, Jennifer; Poy, Thomas; Vantil, Barbara

Subject: RE: (CWA - FY15-124819-3709-CV) Referred to Region - Michigan

Richard,

While I understand this complaint conflates various issues, my intention of forwarding it on to Pete and Barry was to relay the potential NPDES impacts of the complainants allegations.

Best,

Rhiannon Dee

Program Analyst

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Water Division, WC-15J

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From: Benzie, Richard (DEQ) [<mailto:BENZIER@michigan.gov>]

Sent: Friday, February 06, 2015 9:38 AM

To: Dee, Rhiannon

Cc: ostlundp@michigan.gov; Busch, Stephen (DEQ); Prysby, Mike (DEQ); Crooks, Jennifer; Poy, Thomas

Subject: RE: (CWA - FY15-124819-3709-CV) Referred to Region - Michigan

I’m not sure what this complainant is alleging. Do you want Michigan to respond to the allegation that a “company or individual dumped millions of gallons of raw sewage into the city of Flint drinking water” or the allegation that “they(?) have dumped a potential cancer causing chemical into the city’s drinking water” or the allegation that the city of Flint is flushing hydrants and charging customers double? The Office of Drinking Water and Municipal Assistance cannot address the issue surrounding the dumping of raw sewage and we don’t interfere with water rates, but maybe an explanation of the issues that have confronted the city of Flint and their public water supply will help you understand the overall problem.

Last spring, the city of Flint decided to begin relying upon the Flint River as their source of drinking water using a treatment plant that was designed to do so. Last summer, they experienced difficulties with stagnation in some areas of the distribution system due to significantly reduced demands as a result of the loss of a significant percentage of their residential and industrial demands that accelerated over the last decade. During the summer of 2014, they also had a couple of monitoring periods where they detected total coliform at monitoring sites in these stagnant areas, and one time they detected E.coli present. The ensuing boil water advisories and public notification heightened customer concern about the quality of drinking water as a result of the switch from Detroit to the Flint River. Detroit supplied Flint with drinking water from Lake Huron, a much higher quality source than the Flint River. However, monitoring of the Flint water treatment plant tap has never indicated unacceptable water entering the distribution system. In response to these coliform detections and in