

Rennaker, Joanne (DEQ)

From: Wyant, Dan (DEQ)
Sent: Monday, October 19, 2015 3:59 PM
Subject: Information on the City of Flint's Drinking Water and Announcement of Interim Chief for ODWMA - Message from Director Dan Wyant

Dear Colleagues:

I know you have all heard a lot lately about the drinking water situation in Flint, and I want to update you on recent developments.

Today, I released a statement announcing Chief Deputy Director Jim Sygo will immediately assume the role of interim chief of the Office of Drinking Water and Municipal Assistance.

As details of the situation have emerged, it has become apparent staff made a mistake while working with the city of Flint. Simply stated, staff employed a federal protocol they believed was appropriate, and it was not. However, I am convinced our program staff believed they were doing their job correctly, and simply did not have the experience with the particular issue of corrosion control in cities of more than 50,000 people.

Today's actions were the result of a long process. In the spring of 2013, the city of Flint announced it would leave the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) in favor of joining the Karegnondi Water Authority, which is constructing a pipeline to bring drinking water from Lake Huron. In the meantime, the city used the Flint River, treated at the Flint Water Treatment Plant, as its full-time drinking water source.

Since then, the system experienced a number of problems, including most recently, elevated lead levels in some homes and schools. To address public health, the Governor led a charge to bring \$6 million in state funds, plus an additional \$2 million from the city and \$4 million from the C.S. Mott Foundation, to fund the city's reconnection with DWSD.

This was a huge first step in fixing the problem. However, while the switch back to Detroit water carried numerous public health benefits, lead in drinking water is largely a function of outdated local infrastructure. For a long-term fix, we are looking at several options to help the city update its infrastructure and remove all lead service lines.

To ensure safe drinking water in the short-term, the state is providing water filters to every resident in the city of Flint. Many local partners, including the United Way, are also stepping up to ensure the city's schools have bottled water available for children as we design a thorough protocol to test all schools.

I know this is a stressful time for many of you, and I appreciate your dedication and hard work. This is a good time to reflect, as a staff, on our purpose as an agency. Our mission is to protect public health and the environment. Whatever the particular protocol or statute you help to implement or uphold, that is our core reason for being. Keep that at the forefront of your mind.

I am proud to lead a staff of such knowledgeable, committed individuals. Thanks, as always, for the work you do.

Sincerely,

Dan Wyant
Director