

Thelen, Mary Beth (DEQ)

From: Thelen, Mary Beth (DEQ)
Sent: Wednesday, October 01, 2014 11:19 AM
To: Scott, Allison (GOV); Muchmore, Dennis (GOV); Brader, Valerie (GOV)
Cc: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ); Wyant, Dan (DEQ); Datema, Maggie (DEQ); Sygo, Jim (DEQ); Wisniewski, Wendy (GOV); West, Samantha (GOV)
Subject: CITY OF FLINT DRINKING WATER, GOVERNOR'S OFFICE BRIEFING PAPER
Attachments: Governor Briefing - City of Flint 10-1-14.docx; Governor Briefing - City of Flint 10-1-14.pdf; Flint Monthly Pumpage Comparison.pdf; ODWMA-399-022.pdf

Importance: High

Dear Governor, Dennis, and Val:

Per your request, the attached briefing paper is on the City of Flint drinking water situation. Director Dan Wyant has asked that I send this to you. A Word version as well as a pdf version is attached. We have also included a copy of the policy ODWMA-399-022 which specifically provides guidance regarding boil water advisory situations, and a chart showing the significant increase in the City of Flint's water demands following the extreme conditions experienced this past winter.

Allison, please forward to the Governor. Thank you.

If you have any questions or need further information, please let us know. Thank you.

Mary Beth

Mary Beth Thelen
Management Assistant to Director Dan Wyant
Department of Environmental Quality
Constitution Hall, 6th Floor South
Phone: 517-284-6712 or 284-6700 (new numbers)
Fax: 517-241-7401
Thelenm2@michigan.gov

Attachments

FP-GOV2
2/1/14

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE BRIEFING PAPER CITY OF FLINT DRINKING WATER

What contributed to the Boil Water Advisories in the city of Flint?

A number of factors, not one specific cause, likely contributed to the Boil Water Advisories (BWAs) in the city of Flint during August and September 2014. While use of the Flint River has increased the amount of natural organic matter in the city's water, the Flint Water Treatment Plant (WTP) has performed well above treatment requirements for organic carbon removal. In addition, less than 20 percent of the water system was included in the advisory area. If treatment had been compromised, detections would have been widespread throughout the city, rather than in such a localized area.

The city's water distribution system has suffered from a lack of infrastructure investment and asset management. Most of the city's over 550 miles of water mains are now over 75 years old and constructed of cast iron piping. Cast iron pipe is subject to internal corrosion, called tuberculation, which causes buildup on the pipe interior, leading to water quality issues, reduced flow and pressures, and leakage. Tuberculation also encourages the development of biofilms, layers of bacteria that attach to the interior pipe wall. Biofilm growth is common in areas of piping with little or no disinfectant residual, and together with tuberculation can clog water lines to the point of insufficient water pressure.

The city has also experienced decades of a declining user base and water use associated with vacant homes, commercial businesses, and industrial property. Declining water use leads to excess residence time within the city's distribution pipes and water storage facilities, accelerating tuberculation, biofilm growth, and disinfectant residual degradation. While the city has recently seen an infusion of funding for blight removal, contractors completing this work have been improperly using fire hydrants, causing hydraulic disturbances that dislodged and suspended settled debris, which may have contributed to the bacterial contamination.

The winter of 2014 was also one of the coldest experienced by the water system. The city, which historically has unaccounted water losses of over 30 percent, has seen even greater losses since February 2014 due to an increase in cold weather-related water main breaks and leaks. The city lacks a formal maintenance program for its over 7,250 valves, which would normally be used to limit impacts during break repairs. Two valves on the transmission line used to supply the area of the BWAs were found to be closed during the city's investigation, causing longer residence time, reduced disinfectant residual, reduced flow, and reduced pressure. One of these valves has remained broken.