

Workman, Wayne (TREASURY)

From: Saxton, Thomas (Treasury)
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To: Workman, Wayne (TREASURY); Stanton, Terry A. (Treasury); Koryzno, Edward (Treasury)
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Flint mayor to state: Approve plan “as fast as humanly possible” to help keep lead out of water

By LINDSEY SMITH • 16 HOURS AGO
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Flint leaders issued a water advisory last week after health officials raised concerns about lead levels in children's blood tests.

Credit Steve Carmody / Michigan Radio

Flint hasn't been using any corrosion-control method since it switched from Detroit's water system in April 2014. Corrosion-control treatment helps keep lead out of drinking water. Since the switch, more kids are showing up with elevated levels of lead in their blood.

Flint Mayor Dayne Walling says he wants to put corrosion-control treatment back in place, but he needs state approval first. The state says it's going to take a little while to implement.

"One of my requests to (Michigan's) Department of Environmental Quality director is that (approval) be accelerated as fast as humanly possible," Walling said.

"Whatever decisions are coming next, we need that corrosion control in the water treatment process that we have now," he said.

Walling was a guest today on Stateside with Cynthia Canty.

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Listen to Flint Mayor Dayne Walling on Stateside.

Flint spokesman Jason Lorenz says MDEQ made the recommendation to put corrosion-control treatment into the water supply last month. But, he says, it needs MDEQ Director Dan Wyant's official approval.

There's been some debate over whether Flint should have had corrosion control in place the entire time.

MDEQ officials have argued to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that corrosion control is not technically required yet, because the Flint River is a new water source.

"You have to have to do a full year of studying" the water chemistry as it behaves across the system before implementing corrosion control, MDEQ spokesman Brad Wurfel said. He says that's the only way to know what corrosion-control treatment to use.

That period of study was to be completed by June 30.

As the DEQ reads federal regulations, Flint technically has up to two years after the study to install treatment.

But Wurfel says an announcement on the state's decision will come by the end of this week, and "the prescription for optimizing the system for corrosion control is going to be done in Flint by the end of this year."

"If I handed you a bag of chocolate chips and a sack of flour and said 'make cookies,' you'd still need a recipe right? They need to get the results from that testing to understand how much of what to put in the (new water source)," Wurfel said.

"We have a plan to expedite this with the city ... and folks can take some comfort in that," Wurfel said.

It's not clear yet how much the treatment will cost, but Wurfel says "this won't break the bank." A state-appointed emergency manager made the interim switch to the Flint River to save the city money.

Related: Have you missed parts of the Flint water story? Here's a quick rundown.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has not yet answered this question: Was Flint required to have some form of corrosion-control treatment the whole time?

At face value, the EPA rules are clear, all water systems that serve more than 50,000 people must have some kind of corrosion control.