



STATEMENT ON THE SAFETY OF WATER QUALITY IN DETROIT

The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) takes the issue of quality drinking water seriously. Any statements that have suggested our neighborhoods have excessive lead in their water are simply not true. In light of the recent controversy regarding Flint water, DWSD would like to emphasize that for decades, Detroit's water has not only met, but exceeded EPA standards for lead control.

Many of the homes built in the United States prior to the end of World War II contained lead pipes. Today, Detroit no longer allows lead pipes to be used for home construction or repairs. Like many communities with older housing stock, Detroit has long practiced lead corrosion control to ensure the high quality of its water. Federal regulations acknowledge that the best approach to minimize exposure to lead in drinking water is establishing a protective coating in pipes to minimize the ability of lead or other materials from the service lines or plumbing fixtures in homes to leach into the water.

When the issue of lead control came to light in the 1990s, Detroit began a lead corrosion control program, before the EPA required it. Standards under the EPA's "lead and copper rule" state that if lead in the water exceeds 15 ppb (parts per billion), remedial action is required. The lead levels in Detroit water at 2.3 ppb are far under the federal action limit and Detroit is considered an optimized community by the EPA for its corrosion control efforts. A quality check of the water is conducted every four-hours.

Though we are proud of this effort, we continue to be vigilant to ensure that we build upon our progress. The City of Detroit has contracted with the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), the regional water authority that serves southeast Michigan, to perform lead and copper testing as required by the EPA. GLWA provides the communities it serves, including Detroit, with water of unquestionable quality and follows stringent EPA guidelines to ensure that all testing is in compliance with the standards imposed by federal and state regulators.

The most recent testing in Detroit was completed in 2014 which found that, 100% of the homes tested were well below the EPA's action level. The testing included older homes where lead service lines and lead soldering existed. For homes built prior to 1950, there are simple steps that can be taken to ensure safer water. Those efforts include using a water filter to remove lead from the tap, flushing out the tap water lines after a period of stagnation, and minimizing water consumption from the hot water tap where lead is more likely present. Additional information can be found at www.drinktap.org.

Finally, it is important to note that exposure to lead can come from sources other than water. A recent article published by Bridge Magazine titled "Places with Higher Lead Rates than Flint" pointed to lead paint in older homes as a cause for lead exposure. While DWSD is dedicated to working with the Detroit Health Department as well as other City Departments to address lead concerns on a collaborative basis, it is important for residents to be aware of lead-based materials that may be in the home. Homeowners interested in lead testing services should call DWSD Customer Care at 313-267-8000.

--- Gary A. Brown, Director DWSD