



**SPRINGFIELD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION
P.O. BOX 995, SPRINGFIELD, MA 01101**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Public Notification About Drinking Water Test Results
from the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission**

The Springfield Water and Sewer Commission (Commission) is notifying its customers of a violation in drinking water quality regulations. Sample results from December indicated that a rise in haloacetic acids (or HAA5) had exceeded regulatory limits established by MassDEP's Safe Drinking Water regulations. The exceedance was not an immediate health hazard and customers may continue consuming and using their water as usual.

About Haloacetic Acids (HAA5)

HAA5 are formed when chlorine reacts with naturally dissolved organic matter (material from leaves, algae, or aquatic plants) found in surface water supplies such as Cobble Mountain Reservoir, which supplies the Commission's drinking water.

Chlorine is utilized to disinfect waterborne pathogens (such as *E. coli*, cholera, and typhoid), which are considered the largest and most immediate risks associated with drinking water. Chlorine has been used to prevent waterborne illness since the early 20th century.

The above-average rainfall in 2018 increased the levels of dissolved organic matter in Cobble Mountain Reservoir, resulting in more reaction with chlorine and thus higher levels of HAA5. This is a challenge currently being experienced at surface water systems around the region.

Potential Impacts

The presence of elevated HAA5 in drinking water is not an immediate health hazard. If this had been a public health emergency, customers would have been notified within 24 hours.



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The maximum contaminant level (MCL) set for HAA5 provides a wide margin of protection against health effects. HAA5 is regulated because some studies suggest that exposure to HAA5 in excess of the MCL *over many years* may result in an increased risk of developing health problems.

Customers with concerns about severe health vulnerabilities, or about infants or fragile elderly, should contact their health care provider to discuss any additional steps they should take to limit their exposure.

Actions the Commission is Taking to Resolve the Issue

The Commission is currently evaluating modifications to make to its existing treatment processes to reduce HAA5 levels in the distribution system. In addition, a facilities improvement plan is already underway that will identify long-term treatment-process upgrades to more effectively remove dissolved organic matter.

The Commission's West Parish Filters Water Treatment Facility in Westfield, first built in 1909, underwent its most significant modernization upgrade in 1974. Regulations related to HAA5 were first adopted in the 1990s. Since that time the Commission has continually optimized the water treatment plant to meet new and evolving regulatory changes, illustrating the importance of renewed investment in water infrastructure to respond to 21st century scientific understanding and regulations.

Additional Questions

Customers with questions about the public notification or HAA5 should contact Jaimye Bartak, Communications Manager, by emailing jaimye.bartak@waterandsewer.org or calling 413-452-1302.

More information can be found on the Commission's website at:

<http://waterandsewer.org/haa5-frequently-asked-questions/>

MassDEP also provides information on HAA5 at:

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/haa5-in-drinking-water-information-for-consumers>

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