



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

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Contact: Jaimye Bartak
Communications Manager
Springfield Water and Sewer Commission
Tel: (413) 452-1302 (office), 413-835-1942 (cell)
Email: jaimye.bartak@waterandsewer.org

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 an ongoing exceedance of the maximum contaminant level (MCL) for haloacetic acids (HAA5) in drinking water.

Sample results from June indicated that HAA5 exceeded the limit established by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's (MassDEP) Safe Drinking Water regulations. The exceedance was not an immediate health hazard and customers may continue consuming and using their water as normal. If this had been a public health emergency, customers would have been notified within 24 hours.

HAA5 Regulation

HAA5 is regulated because some studies suggest that consumption of water with HAA5 in excess of the MCL *over many years* (i.e. decades or a lifetime) may result in an increased risk of developing health problems. The MCL set for HAA5 provides a wide margin of protection against health effects.

There is no need to boil or filter water, or to drink bottled water. Customers with very fragile health vulnerabilities or specific health-related questions may wish to consult with their doctors about whether any additional measures are prudent to limit exposure.

Cause of Continued Elevated HAA5

HAA5 forms when chlorine reacts with dissolved natural organic matter found in surface water supplies such as the Commission's Cobble Mountain Reservoir. Dissolved natural organic matter enters the reservoir from rain and snow running over natural plant matter and soil in the forest.

In 2018, over sixty inches of rain fell in the watershed, about 40 percent more rainfall than in a typical year, following approximately two years of drought conditions. Over half of this rainfall amount fell



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between September and December 2018. This above-average rainfall greatly increased the levels of dissolved natural organic matter entering the reservoir.

Dissolved natural organic matter is decreasing from its most elevated levels in 2018, but still remains higher than normal. The elevated dissolved natural organic matter levels continue to react with necessary levels of chlorine to produce higher-than-normal levels of HAA5.

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

Near-Term Outlook

Though dissolved natural organic matter levels are decreasing, the Commission expects exceedances of the HAA5 MCL to continue through at least 2019. This is in part because the regulatory limit for HAA5 is a running annual average, and elevated results from late 2018 and earlier in 2019 will factor into future compliance calculations. The next sampling will take place in September 2019.

To address the HAA5 exceedance the Commission has adjusted its treatment processes and regularly conducts system flushing to limit the formation of HAA5 as much as possible.

Permanent Solutions

In 2015 the Commission initiated a comprehensive planning process to upgrade the West Parish Filters Water Treatment Plant. While the Commission has regularly optimized the existing plant processes to meet regulatory changes over the years, the plant's last comprehensive upgrade was in 1974. Regulations related to HAA5 were first adopted in 1998, and revised in 2012.

The planning process will result in plant upgrades that will ensure consistent water quality and regulatory compliance for HAA5. In September, the Commission will begin isolated pilot testing to evaluate new treatment process alternatives that will prevent elevated HAA5. This testing will determine the new treatment upgrades that will be constructed at the plant. In addition, the Commission is also commencing with a detailed raw water sampling program this summer at Cobble Mountain Reservoir to further inform the upgrades.

Upon completion of the pilot testing next summer, the Commission will immediately begin design of the treatment upgrades. Upon approval by MassDEP, a 36-month construction schedule is anticipated. Cost estimates for the pilot program, project design, and project construction are estimated at approximately \$70 million.

Additional Information

Customers with questions about the public notification or HAA5 should contact the Commission by calling 413-310-3501, or by emailing info@waterandsewer.org.



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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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