



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

Date of Issuance: January 6, 2020

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

Sample results from December 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. Customers do not need to boil or filter their water or drink bottled water. 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 (NOM) found in surface water supplies such as the Commission's Cobble Mountain Reservoir. Dissolved NOM enters the reservoir from rain and snow running over natural plant matter and soil in the forest. Since the high amounts of precipitation in 2018 caused an increase in NOM in Cobble Mountain Reservoir, the raw water quality has continued to evolve. The amount and types of dissolved NOM in Cobble Mountain Reservoir, the main source of drinking water supply, require an increased amount of chlorine to maintain safe



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disinfection. The chlorine dosage required at the time samples were taken for HAA5 has resulted in higher than typical HAA5 levels in the Commission's treated water.

Chlorine has been used to disinfect waterborne pathogens (such as *E. coli*, cholera, and typhoid), which are considered the largest and most immediate public health risks associated with drinking water, since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. While the Commission is committed to complying with all drinking water regulations, protecting the immediate public health and safety of its customers by preventing waterborne illness through proper disinfection is its foremost priority.

### **Near-Term Outlook**

The Commission expects exceedances of the HAA5 MCL to continue into 2020. This is in part because the regulatory limit for HAA5 is a running annual average, and elevated results from late 2018 and 2019 will factor into future compliance calculations. The next sampling will take place in March 2020.

The Commission has optimized its existing treatment processes to the maximum extent possible to reduce the formation of HAA5. These include the use of new coagulants to remove more dissolved NOM, daily review of chlorine dosage levels, and the addition of mixers to water storage tanks to reduce water age. In addition, the Commission regularly conducts flushing in the distribution system in the warmer months to limit the formation of HAA5.

### **Permanent Solutions**

The Commission has been actively working to permanently prevent elevated HAA5 since 2015, when it initiated a comprehensive planning process to upgrade the West Parish Filters Water Treatment Plant. While the Commission has regularly optimized 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 is already well advanced and will result in significant plant upgrades that will ensure consistent water quality and regulatory compliance for HAA5. This fall the Commission began isolated pilot testing to evaluate treatment process alternatives to reduce HAA5. Pilot testing will continue into summer 2020. This testing will inform the new treatment upgrades that will be constructed at the plant. In addition, the Commission also implemented a detailed raw water sampling program at Cobble Mountain Reservoir to further inform the upgrades.

Upon completion of the pilot testing, the Commission will immediately begin design of the treatment upgrades. Upon review and 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**



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

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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