SPRINGFIELD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION

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Established
1996

July 2, 2020

Dear Healthcare Providers,

During the week of July 6, the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission (Commission) will be issuing notices to all of its customers in Springfield and Ludlow regarding a violation of the maximum contaminant level (MCL) for haloacetic acids (HAA5). This exceedance is based on samples collected in June 2020. Below please find an update on the exceedance and how it might impact your organization.

July 2020 Update

- Sample results taken on June 3, 2020 showed an exceedance of the MCL for HAA5 in the drinking water.
- The MCL for HAA5 is 60 parts per billion (ppb), calculated as the average of the past year's results at an individual sample site (known as the "locational running annual average"). Sample results at 6 of the 8 individual locations have exceeded the MCL.
- The amount and type of natural dissolved organic matter (NOM) in the raw reservoir water are primary factors in the formation of HAA5. Detailed data on raw water quality preliminarily indicate that the type of NOM in the reservoir fluctuated this spring, influencing the elevated levels of HAA5.

Information Relevant to Healthcare Providers

Per MassDEP regulations, the Commission is including public notification letters in the bills of all retail customers in Springfield and Ludlow. Customers should begin receiving their bills the week of July 6. Water customers in Agawam, Longmeadow, and East Longmeadow – municipalities that purchase Commission water wholesale – also received similar notices from their municipalities.

Mandated language in the public notification for HAA5 includes the following:

"If you have a severely compromised immune system, have an infant, are pregnant, or are elderly, you may be at increased risk and should seek advice from your health care providers about drinking this water."

- Healthcare providers may receive questions from patients about this notice, and may wish to consult with MassDEP regarding scientific/technical resources about HAA5:

    - MassDEP Drinking Water Program Director: 617-292-5770, program.director-dwp@state.ma.us
    - https://www.mass.gov/service-details/haa5-in-drinking-water-information-for-consumers

Background

- HAA5 is formed when chlorine reacts with dissolved natural organic matter (NOM) found in surface water supplies such as Cobble Mountain Reservoir, the main source of the drinking water supply.
- The amount of chlorine necessary to maintain safe disinfection is determined by the amount and types of dissolved NOM in Cobble Mountain Reservoir.
- Testing for HAA5 occurs quarterly. Customers must receive a notification each time there is an exceedance at any sampling site in any given quarter. The next sampling round will be in September.

Solutions

- To address the HAA5 exceedance, the Commission continues to optimize its existing treatment processes based on the changing quality of the raw water to limit the formation of HAA5 as much as possible. This include adjustments to coagulants, filtration processes, chlorination application, water storage, and extensive system flushing.
- In 2015 the Commission proactively initiated a comprehensive planning process to upgrade the West Parish Filters Water Treatment Plant to ensure consistent water quality and regulatory compliance for HAA5. A panel of national experts is advising this process.
- Isolated pilot testing of potential new treatment methods began in fall 2019 and will conclude in late summer 2020. Initial results of the pilot testing indicate potential benefits from utilizing an alternate coagulant that is more effective at removing NOM. With the approval of MassDEP, a full-scale plant trial of this potential alternative is planned for later in 2020 and if successful, this treatment change would result in water quality improvements in 2021.
- Full results of the pilot testing will also inform the construction of new, permanent treatment upgrades at the plant. Following the pilot testing the Commission will immediately begin design of these upgrades for review and approval by MassDEP.