



**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 an ongoing exceedance of the maximum contaminant level (MCL) for haloacetic acids (HAA5) in drinking water. Sample results taken September 1, 2020 indicate that HAA5 exceeded the limit established by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's (MassDEP) Safe Drinking Water regulations.

The September 1<sup>st</sup> results also indicate, however, a reduction in the HAA5 levels in the drinking water from previous quarters. The MCL of 60 ppb is calculated as the annual running average at each of the eight individual sample locations. All individual sample-site results from September 1, 2020 were below 60 ppb. Yet since the annual average at two sample sites exceeded 60 ppb, the results still qualify as an exceedance of the MCL.

The improvement in water quality results is due to changes in the reservoir water quality as well as measures implemented by the Commission to reduce HAA5 levels in the drinking water. 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.

**Raw Water Quality and Mitigation Measures**

HAA5 forms when chlorine reacts with dissolved natural organic matter (NOM) found in surface water bodies such as the Commission's Cobble Mountain Reservoir, the main source of the Commission's water supply. The amount of chlorine necessary to maintain safe disinfection is determined by the amount and types of dissolved NOM that remains after treating the water from Cobble Mountain Reservoir. Individual sample-site results from September 1, 2020, were all below 60 ppb, indicating that dissolved NOM levels have decreased from previously elevated levels. However, since the regulatory limit is based on the average of the HAA5 results from the past four quarters, the results are still in exceedance of the MCL.



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In addition, various measures implemented by the Commission to limit the formation of HAA5 in the distribution system have also factored into the improved results. These measures include reducing water storage time; optimizing treatment processes and chlorine dosages; and flushing the distribution system.

### **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 potential health risks. 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.

### **Near-Term Outlook**

The Commission expects exceedances of the HAA5 MCL to continue throughout the remainder of 2020, and possibly into 2021. This is in part because the regulatory limit for HAA5 is a running annual average, and elevated results from earlier in 2020 will still factor into future compliance calculations. The next sampling will take place in December 2020.

### **Short-Term and 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. A panel of national experts convened by the Commission is guiding these activities. Last fall, a pilot study commenced to determine the most effective treatment process to remove more dissolved NOM and reduce HAA5. The pilot study is ongoing into this fall. Results from the pilot study will inform the necessary upgrades to make to the treatment plant to address long-term water quality issues, including HAA5. To date, results of the pilot study indicate potential water quality benefits from utilizing an alternate coagulant in the existing treatment process that has been shown to be more effective at removing NOM. A half-plant trial of this promising coagulant is planned for late 2020/early 2021 upon approval by MassDEP.

Following the pilot testing, the Commission will immediately begin design of the permanent treatment upgrades for review and approval by MassDEP. Cost estimates for the pilot program, project design, and project construction are estimated at approximately \$86 million. The Commission is advancing this work as quickly as possible while committing significant resources to the process.



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**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](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>

**END**