

Indian Hill Water Works

Quality of Water – Facts About Lead

In light of the current drinking water lead contamination situation in Flint, Michigan, the Village would like to provide some basic facts about lead, background about Flint's situation, and information about the ongoing water quality and treatment practices by Indian Hill Water Works which prevents this situation from occurring here.

The safety of drinking water is Indian Hill Water Work's (IHWW) highest priority. IHWW works daily to ensure water delivered from our facilities meets or exceeds all regulatory requirements.

IHWW's Ion-Exchange Treatment Plant is used for water softening, disinfection, fluoridation, and corrosion control.

Regulations controlling lead in water

The US EPA recognized the danger that lead poses in drinking water. In 1991, the EPA issued the Lead and Copper Rule which mandated that water systems adjust their water chemistry to control corrosion, and therefore limit lead leaching into the water. These rules have been revised several times since 1991.

As required, IHWW treats the drinking water to minimize the lead that may leach leak into the drinking water. This treatment is called corrosion control. Monitoring has shown that the program is effective in minimizing city lead levels in home tap water.

Specifically, the lead corrosion control treatment consists of:

- Zinc orthophosphate being added to the water to form a protective film on the inside surfaces of the pipe to minimize lead leaching into the water
- IHWW monitors monitoring the effectiveness of this strategy as per the regulation

IHWW is completely in compliance with the existing lead regulations.

Lead problems in Flint, MI

The City of Flint, Michigan has been in a difficult financial situation for a number of years and was required to work under a series of Emergency Managers appointed by the Governor of Michigan.

It was determined that Flint could save millions of dollars per year if it joined a newly-forming local water authority. This water authority would get its water from Lake Huron, like the City of Detroit, and would provide treatment, including corrosion control. The Flint City Council and the Emergency Manager agreed to join the water authority in 2013. However, this water authority would not be able to start supplying water to Flint until mid-2016 at the earliest. During the interim, the City chose to re-commission a water treatment plant that Flint owned to treat water from the Flint River rather than continuing to purchase more expensive water from Detroit.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) approved the plans for treatment even though they did not include corrosion control treatment as required by federal law. In April 2014, the re-commissioned water treatment plant began serving water to Flint and the supply from Detroit stopped.

Because a corrosion control program was absent, lead leached into the water. As a result, in 2015 public health officials noticed that the number of children with high lead levels had doubled soon after the change in water source. In addition, the lack of corrosion control resulted in the surfaces that had buildup on the inside of the iron water mains to start to dissolve. The community began to experience sometimes severe red and brown water and objectionable tastes and odors to the water.

This deterioration in water quality, along with the realization that there had been a noticeable increase in blood lead levels in many of the children, led to severe public outcry. The Governor and President Obama have declared a federal emergency in Flint.

The city has recently switched back to purchasing water from Detroit, but it will take time before the protective barrier on the pipes is re-established. Bottled water and water filters are now being provided to the residents of Flint for drinking and cooking. The Director of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality has resigned and there are several pending lawsuits and ongoing criminal investigations.

Immediate actions to address customer concerns

More than 95% of the homes tested in Indian Hill have no or very low levels of lead. Homes built before 1927 are more likely to have lead pipes. If a homeowner has any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact IHWW as they will gladly test water for lead (at no charge) or provide a list of labs certified to do lead water analysis.

In order for IHWW to perform the analysis, customers will need to determine if pipes are lead. Pipes can be made of different materials including plastic, copper, iron, and lead.

To test for a lead pipe, customers can use a coin and scratch the water line coming into your home. If the pipe scratches easily and the mark is shiny and silver, the pipe is likely lead. At this point, the water should be tested, and the pipe should be replaced.

Conclusion

Providing and maintaining safe drinking water to customers is the number one priority of the IHWW.

The water situation in Flint, Michigan does not exist in Indian Hill. IHWW employs a longstanding lead corrosion control program and is in compliance with all federal and state EPA regulations.

If customers have questions about the status of pipes in their home, they can call IHWW (513-831-3885) for assistance.