

Dear Watervliet Water Customer:

This notice is to advise our customers that our water system that serves the Highland Club Apartments, Fenimore Trace Apartments, Hillside Dr and residents on Wiswall Drive was in noncompliance with the drinking water standard for total Trihalomethanes (THMs). **It is important to note that this is not an emergency, and the drinking water was and is still safe to drink, cook with and bathe in. However, we want to notify you about what has happened and what the city is doing to correct the situation.**

The US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) and New York State Health Department have set a maximum allowable limit for THMs in drinking water at 80 micrograms per liter (ug/L). The THM compliance value is calculated by averaging the water sampling results over the last four quarters. Recent testing has resulted in Watervliet's average increasing to 82.8 ug/L.

What are Trihalomethanes (THMs)?

THMs are formed in drinking water during treatment by chlorine (the most commonly used disinfectant in New York State), which reacts with certain acids that are in naturally occurring organic material (e.g., decomposing vegetation such as tree leaves, algae, or other aquatic plants) in surface water sources such as rivers and lakes. The amount of THMs in drinking water can change from day to day, depending on the temperature, the amount of organic material in the water, the amount of chlorine added, and a variety of other factors. Drinking water is disinfected by public water suppliers to kill bacteria and viruses that could cause serious illnesses. For this reason, disinfection of drinking water by chlorination is beneficial to public health.

Some studies suggest that people who drink chlorinated water (which contains trihalomethanes) or water containing elevated levels of trihalomethanes for long periods of time may have an increased risk for certain health effects. For example, some studies of people who drank chlorinated drinking water for 20 to 30 years show that long term exposure to disinfection by-products (including trihalomethanes) is associated with an increased risk for certain types of cancer. A few studies of women who drank water containing trihalomethanes during pregnancy show an association between exposure to elevated levels of trihalomethanes and small increased risks for low birth weights, miscarriages and birth defects. However, in each of the studies, how long and how frequently people actually drank the water, as well as how much trihalomethanes the water contained is not known for certain. Therefore, we do not know for sure if the observed increases in risk for cancer and other health effects are due to trihalomethanes or some other factor. The individual trihalomethanes chloroform, bromodichloromethane and dibromochloromethane cause cancer in laboratory animals exposed to high levels over their lifetimes. Chloroform, bromodichloromethane and dibromochloromethane are also known to cause effects in laboratory animals after high levels of exposure, primarily on the liver, kidney, nervous system and on their ability to bear healthy offspring. Chemicals that cause adverse health effects in laboratory animals after high levels of exposure may pose a risk for adverse health effects in humans exposed to lower levels over long periods of time.

What does this mean for you?

At present, the water is suitable to drink, cook with, and bath in. Some people may wish to take additional practical measures to reduce their exposure. We do not consider these measures necessary to avoid health effects, but they are provided as options. These include using bottled water for drinking and cooking purposes or using water pitchers containing an activated carbon filter or a tap-mounted activated carbon filter. These filters are readily available in many grocery and home improvement stores. Ventilating bathroom areas (e.g., using exhaust fans or opening windows) when showering or bathing can also help reduce exposures from chemicals released into the air.

What is the City's Water Department doing to address the problem?

The Water Department has recently begun engineering for the upgrades at its filter plant and part of these upgrades will take into account ways to help reduce out THM/HAA5s within the system. The City has also been working on a watershed study with the Capital Regional Planning Commission on better ways we can help protect and reduce pollutants of concern that enter our reservoir in Guilderland. The organic loading in the reservoir that is causing our exceedances is primarily due to the high water chestnut growth throughout the growing seasons. The City has recently purchased a Weedoo boat and are looking at various barges/ transport boats that will aid in the water chestnut removal program. This program will begin during this summer. The water treatment plant operators are also changing certain water treatment processes to reduce the formation of THMs. The water department is also examining what changes might be made in the water distribution system to minimize THMs. In addition, the City has contacted our consulting engineer for expert advice.

For additional information, you may wish to review the information in the links to the US EPA and US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding THMs:

www.cdc.gov/safewater/chlorination-byproducts.html

www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/stage-1-and-stage-2-disinfectants-and-disinfection-byproducts-rules

We value you as a customer and we are committed to addressing these issues as expeditiously as practicable. If you have any questions or would like further information, please feel free to contact our office at (518) 270-3800 Ext. 122 or the Albany County Health Department at (518) 447-4620.

Sincerely,

Joseph LaCivita
General Manager
Commissioner of Public Works