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PWSA 2016 LEAD TEST RESULTS

Pittsburgh, PA - The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA) reported the results from compliance testing for lead and copper required by state and federal regulations today. This is the first set of 2016 compliance tests; the second set will be completed by December 2016. These compliance tests are required every three years, in addition to the customer requested lead tests that are ongoing, and the results of which have previously been reported.

PWSA pre-selected 100 residential sites for the compliance test based on a method prescribed under regulatory guidelines requiring a water provider obtain tap samples from homes that have, or are expected to have, lead service lines or plumbing. Service lines are the connections from the property to the water main and are considered to be the primary source of lead corrosion. Results completed by an independent, certified lab and submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) are as follows:

- 45 are non-detect for lead
- 15 are between 2.1 and 4.6 ppb (parts per billion)
- 7 are between 5 and 9.8 ppb
- 16 are between 10 and 14 ppb
- 6 are between 16 and 19 ppb
- 7 are between 22 and 38 ppb
- 4 are between 50 and 75 ppb

These sample results are analyzed to determine the 90th percentile level of lead in the tap water samples. This is not an average of all samples, but rather a calculation to determine whether 10 percent of the samples exceed the action level of 15 ppb for lead.

For this set of tests, that number will be 22 ppb, which exceeds the 15 ppb action level for lead. An exceedance of the action level is not a violation of the regulations, but can trigger other requirements that include additional distribution system water quality monitoring, optimization of corrosion control treatment, source water monitoring/treatment, public education, and lead service line replacement. This 90th percentile level for lead is what is reported on the annual drinking water quality report.

David Donahoe, Interim Executive Director of PWSA, said that the potential for exceeding the action level was not unexpected. Recent published reports indicate that 5,300 water providers across the country are out of compliance with the lead and copper rule, largely as a result of failure to properly test and inform the public about lead in their systems.

“Pittsburgh is not one of these. We have completed the required testing, reported it to the regulators, and are informing the public as soon as these results have been certified,” Donahoe said.



Lead enters drinking water mainly from corrosion of plumbing materials, like lead service lines and lead plumbing in homes. PWSA has not experienced issues with lead in water leaving its water treatment plant. In April of this year, DEP sampled water leaving PWSA's plant and reported lead levels at less than 1 ppb. Copper has been below the action level in all of the compliance testing.

Since 2004, Pittsburgh has reported a growth in designated sample for lead corrosion, the result of an aging service line infrastructure. Those results are:

- 2013 14.8 ppb
- 2010 10 ppb
- 2007 9.0 ppb
- 2004 9.5 ppb
- 2001 6 ppb

The new results are also consistent with what PWSA has seen in customer requested tests, where 5 percent of the homes tested show lead levels above 15 ppb.

In May 2016, Donahoe reported that PWSA would take a series of steps to address water quality, including the lead issue. These came out of recommendations from an internal working group, as well as the administrative order issued in April by the DEP.

Attached to this release is an update on the status of those actions as of today, including the results of the compliance tests cited above. This report will be regularly updated and posted online as new information is received.

In addition to the steps already taken, PWSA will be required to provide specific notice of the findings of this compliance test to customers and various educational, health care, and nonprofit organizations. The Authority will be required to continue replacing Authority owned lead service lines and will offer customers the opportunity to do so as that work progresses. PWSA currently uses a major water line replacement program in Lawrenceville as the demonstration of how this can be accomplished.

Pittsburgh prides itself on having an abundant and quality water supply. PWSA has committed itself to do its part in making sure that this remains true from the source to the tap, and will continue to work with regulators and customers toward that end.

Information on lead issues in water, including health risks and protective measures, is available at:

- U.S. EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline - www.epa.gov/lead
- Centers for Disease Control - www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/water.htm
- Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) - www.achd.net/lead
- PWSA - www.pgh2o.com/lead-facts

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA) provides water and sewer services to more than 300,000 customers throughout the City of Pittsburgh and surrounding areas.

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