

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – Water Quality Parameter Exceedance

Why Is PWSA notifying customers?

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA) is required to monitor pH as part of its permit from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The permit requires PWSA to maintain pH levels in the water system between 7.2 and 8.6.

Three (3) water samples that were taken on June 17, 2016, found a pH level of 8.7. These samples were slightly higher than the permitted level of 8.6. Water samples taken thirteen (13) days after the initial testing found pH levels to be back within acceptable range.

The levels found do not indicate a risk to your health or the water supply.

Are there potential health impacts?

No. There are no known health impacts related to the levels of pH found by PWSA. If you have specific health concerns, you should contact your doctor.

Why is pH monitored in the drinking water system?

pH sampling can indicate if PWSA is adequately treating its drinking water to reduce corrosion in pipes. Corrosion in pipes can cause copper, lead and other contaminants to leach into drinking water.

A low pH level in the water system would indicate that the water is acidic. Acidic water can lead to corrosion in the pipes that carry drinking water. PWSA's testing did not indicate a low pH level.

Why did PWSA exceed the pH limit?

Per DEP regulations, PWSA had nine (9) calendar days to resample the water after finding samples that exceeded the upper pH limit. PWSA resampled water thirteen (13) calendar days later. Those samples indicated pH levels were back within the allowable range.

What has PWSA done to correct the issue?

PWSA corrected the issue by improving its sampling processes to account for random variations of pH in its large drinking water distribution system. In addition, the Authority is conducting a study to determine the optimal water treatment chemicals to further reduce the risk of corrosion in pipes.



INFORMATION ON LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

PWSA found high levels of lead in drinking water in some homes. Lead can cause serious health problems. For more information, please call PWSA at 412.255.2423 or visit www.pgh2o.com/lead-facts. If you do not have access to a computer, visit your local library branch and they will help you connect for free. PWSA can also provide paper copies of information upon request.

If you have specific health concerns, consult your health care provider. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggests that you may want to ask your health care provider about testing children to determine levels of lead in their blood. Here are some steps you can take to reduce exposure to lead in drinking water:

- **Run your water to flush out lead.** If water hasn't been used for several hours, run it for 15-30 seconds or until it becomes cold or reaches a steady temperature before using for drinking or cooking. This process flushes lead-containing water from pipes.
- **Use cold water for cooking and preparing baby formula.** Lead dissolves more easily in hot water. Do not drink, cook with, or make baby formula using hot water.
- **Do not boil water to remove lead.** Boiling water will not reduce lead.
- **Look for alternative sources or treatment of water.** Drink bottled water or purchase an NSF water filter that is certified for lead.
- **Identify if your plumbing fixtures contain lead.** There are lead check swabs that can detect lead on plumbing surfaces such as solder and pipes. These swabs can be purchased at plumbing and home improvement stores. Consider having lead-containing pipes and fixtures replaced.
- **Contact PWSA if you decide to replace your lead service line for information about coordinating efforts.**
- **Visit the EPA's website for more on lead in drinking water:**
www.epa.gov/lead

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER

FAILURE TO INSTALL REQUIRED CORROSION CONTROL TREATMENT

ESTE INFORME CONTIENE INFORMACIÓN IMPORTANTE ACERCA DE SU AGUA POTABLE. HAGA QUE ALGUIEN LO TRADUZCA PARA USTED, O HABLE CON ALGUIEN QUE LO ENTIENDA.

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority Has Violated a Treatment Technique

Our water system recently violated a drinking water quality parameter. Although this was not an emergency, as our customer, you have the right to know what happened, what you should do, and what we are doing to correct this situation.

We routinely monitor your water for the presence of drinking water contaminants. Testing results we received on June 17, 2016, showed that our system exceeded the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) permitted level for pH. The DEP's allowable range for pH is 7.2 to 8.6 out in the distribution system. During the monitoring period in June 2016 there were three occasions out in the distribution system where pH was found at a reading of 8.7.

What should I do?

- **You do not need to use an alternative (i.e., bottled water) water supply.** However, if you have specific health concerns, consult your doctor.

What does this mean?

- This is not an immediate health risk. If there had been an immediate risk to your health, you would have been notified immediately.

What happened? What was done?

PWSA routinely collects water samples in its distribution system to monitor lead and copper levels and other water quality parameters. Per its permit with the DEP, PWSA must maintain pH levels in its water distribution system between 7.2 and 8.6. In June of 2016, PWSA collected three (3) samples that detected a pH level of 8.7. The sites were retested the following week and the detected levels of pH were within the acceptable range of 7.2 and 8.6. We have resolved this issue.

PWSA's DEP permit issued in 1997 requires that when a pH level is exceeded, a resampling needs to take place immediately upon discovery of exceedance and have no more than nine (9) calendar days total within a six month period out of range. This notice is required because the resampling took place in 13 days after the initial exceedance. The resampling indicated that the problem has been resolved. PWSA is improving its sampling processes to ensure incidents like this do not occur in the future.

In March 2016, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a paper suggesting that there should not be an upper limit for pH in water distribution systems. Higher levels of pH actually help reduce corrosion in lead and copper pipes. PWSA is currently conducting a corrosion control study to determine the optimal water treatment chemicals for reducing corrosion in pipes.

For more information, please contact PWSA Customer Service at 412-255-2423.

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

This notice is being sent to you by the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority

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