

STATEMENT: Update on downriver communities' water quality
January 16, 2017

"Taste and odor are associated with a spike in turbidity in the source water. When taste and odor issues were raised in a number of downriver communities, the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) expanded its testing, increasing the number of samples being taken at the Southwest Water Treatment Facility (which serves the communities affected) and within the distribution system. Results of this increased testing have all shown that the water meets the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Act regulatory standards and is safe.

Testing has also been completed for bacteria, and all results have returned negative for bacteria in the water. In addition we tested the Southwest Water Treatment Facility source and tap for volatile organic chemicals. The results indicated nothing unusual about the source or tap water. Furthermore, we collected and monitored for hardness, alkalinity, turbidity, fluoride, taste and odor in sample sites within the distribution system and monitored toxicity. Results indicate the water meets water quality criteria except for taste and odor.

As taste and odor complaints increased, the treatment plant began feeding powdered activated carbon to mitigate taste and odor issues.

The Authority is testing water for treatment 24/7 to ensure water quality. Typically, when we receive complaints we will increase testing to investigate cause and ensure water quality. With that in mind, all downriver communities were tested last Thursday and/or Friday. With an increase in calls, additional samples are being collected in the distribution system in those communities that have had an increase in the number of complaints.

Concerned residents should contact their local municipality with questions or to report an issue."

--Cheryl Porter, COO, GLWA



GLWA Downriver Water Update Q&A

1. What is causing the taste and odor issues?

Taste and odor are associated with a spike in turbidity in the source water.

The Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) is still investigating the situation to determine cause. Our primary focus is on correction, and an investigation is being done to determine cause and future corrective measures, if appropriate.

GLWA is committed to providing water of unquestionable quality, which includes taste and odor. We are ensuring that quality now, and are taking all appropriate steps to discover what caused this and mitigate the situation for relief to our customers.

2. Why is the smell concentrated to the downriver area?

The Southwest Water Treatment Facility is the primary location from which downriver communities are served, therefore our investigation of the source began with that plant, which the communities have in common.

3. What is being done to resolve the issue?

When taste and odor issues were raised in a number of downriver communities, GLWA expanded its testing, increasing the number of samples being taken at the Southwest Water Treatment Facility and within the distribution system. Results of this increased testing have all shown that the water meets the regulatory standards set in the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Act and is safe.

Testing has also been completed for bacteria, and all results have returned negative for bacteria in the water. In addition we tested the Southwest Water Treatment Facility source and tap for volatile organic chemicals. The results indicated nothing unusual about the source or tap water. We have also collected and monitored for hardness, alkalinity, turbidity, fluoride, taste and odor in sample sites within the distribution system, and monitored toxicity. Results indicate the water meets water quality criteria except for taste and odor.

As taste and odor complaints increased, the treatment plant began feeding powdered activated carbon to mitigate those issues.

GLWA is also working on a strategy to flush the system in hopes of assisting the mitigation effort. GLWA will work with its customer communities in this effort to reduce impacts on customers.

4. How often are you testing, what specific areas have been tested?

The Authority is testing water for treatment 24/7 to ensure water quality. The standard frequency on testing depends on the type of testing. We can have a frequency of every 15 minutes for something like turbidity, and every 4 hours for something like fluoride.

Typically, when we receive complaints we will increase testing to investigate cause and ensure water quality as it pertains to that specific complaint. With that in mind, all downriver communities were tested last Thursday and/or Friday. With the growing number of calls, additional samples are being collected in the distribution system in those communities that have had an increase in the number of complaints. We'd like to reiterate that results of this ramped-up testing have all shown that the water meets regulatory standards and is safe.

In regards to testing occurring in specific communities, GLWA is a wholesale provider and therefore does not have direct relationships with residential customers. In situations such as this, communities have collected samples and brought them to GLWA for testing. The Authority then reports those results to the communities from which we received the samples.

5. Should residents, as well as their pets, be concerned about drinking and/or bathing in the water?

No, all testing completed on the water leaving the treatment plant and in the distribution system have met the regulatory standards set in the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Act. All samples were tested for toxicity and the results indicated none.

6. Should residents drink bottled for the time being?

All tests have conclusively shown that the water is meeting all regulatory standards and is safe.

7. Who should residents contact with questions?

Concerned residents should contact their local municipality with questions or to report an issue.