

Milwaukee Water Works

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Milwaukee Water Safe to Drink Despite Floodwaters and Sewer Overflows

All Milwaukee Water Works drinking water treatment processes are functioning optimally so there is no need for any increased level of concern regarding drinking water quality for Milwaukee and the 15 communities that receive water from the utility, Superintendent Carrie Lewis said today.

The Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) reported its monitoring in the community for illness, including *Cryptosporidium*, and found no evidence of any increases. Director of Disease Control and Environmental Health Paul Biedrzycki also said the department had not received any complaints from citizens regarding illness or problems with water quality in Milwaukee.

The Milwaukee Water Works treats Lake Michigan water to protect the public health with a multiple-step process that removes illness-causing microorganisms and contaminants. The water is disinfected with ozone, a highly reactive gas that destroys microorganisms, controls taste and odor, and reduces byproducts from chlorine disinfection. Coagulation, settling, and filtration remove additional particles. Fluoride is added for dental health. A final disinfection ensures safe, high quality drinking water throughout the distribution system and at consumer faucets. Two plants, Linnwood and Howard Avenue, operate 24 hours a day to provide safe drinking water to Milwaukee and 15 communities.

During and after recent heavy rains, the primary measurement of water clarity, turbidity, has not increased above normal for the water entering either plant. Microbiological testing of lake water entering the plant has not detected any indicators of fecal contamination. The quality of treated drinking water has been unchanged throughout the stormy period.

The Milwaukee Water Works performs continuous monitoring of the water treatment and purification process and water quality characteristics, collecting thousands of test measurements daily. The utility continually meets U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements to test for 90 regulated contaminants, and voluntarily tests for over 500 non-regulated contaminants to assure the highest quality water. Most of the contaminants are not detected.

The EPA has recognized the Milwaukee Water Works and MHD for their interagency relationships with local and state officials in enteric disease surveillance and response. The MHD routinely recommends immuno-compromised individuals consult with their doctors about drinking water. A pamphlet based on EPA and Centers for Disease Control guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by *Cryptosporidium* is available by from the Milwaukee Health Department, (414) 286-3606, or view it English or Spanish at www.milwaukee.gov/health; click on *Air/Water/Toxics*.

Milwaukee Water Works customers include a portion of Franklin, Greenfield, Hales Corners, St. Francis, and West Milwaukee, Brown Deer, Butler, Greendale, Menomonee Falls, portions of Mequon and Thiensville (through We Energies Water Services), a portion of New Berlin, Shorewood, Wauwatosa, and West Allis.

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Safe, Abundant Drinking Water.