

Important Information about Your Drinking Water

This report contains important information about your drinking water. Please translate it or speak with someone who understands it or ask the contact listed below for a translation.

Elevated Disinfection Byproducts at Town of Somerset Water Department

Our water system exceeded a drinking water standard, or maximum contaminant level (MCL), for a water disinfection byproduct (DBP). Testing results came from routine monitoring of drinking water contaminants on December 5, 2023.

The level of total trihalomethane (TTHM) at our system's sampling sites located at 1159 Read Street, 1771 G.A.R. Highway, 1833 Wilbur Avenue and 140 Wood Street were 50.2, 34.1, 45.9 and 52.5 ug/L (parts per billion, ppb)¹ respectively. The standard is 80 ug/L for TTHM.

The system concentrations are determined by averaging their concentrations in all samples collected at each sampling location for the past 12 months. The "Locational Running Annual Average" was exceeded at 1159 Read Street at 84.8 ppb.

What does this mean?

This is not an emergency. If it had been an emergency, you would have been notified within 24 hours.

Chlorine or ozone are added to drinking water sources to disinfect drinking water. They can interact with natural material in the water to form DBP.

Some people who drink water containing trihalomethanes in excess of the MCL over many years may experience problems with their liver, kidneys, or central nervous system, and may have an increased risk of getting cancer.

In addition, young children (including infants), pregnant women, or those who may become pregnant may be potentially more susceptible to risks from exposures to chemicals, such as TTHM.

What is Being Done?

Like many communities in the state, Somerset has not been able to consistently meet the TTHM levels required by Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) intermittently since 2015. A public notice has been issued for every prior occurrence.

The TTHM levels are affected by water age. In Somerset, this problem is exacerbated due to our high-capacity distribution system and our two (2) three-million-gallon water storage tanks located at Hot & Cold Lane. This piping system and tanks were built to accommodate the very large water demands of the two (2) power plants in town that are both now closed. Treated water from our water treatment plant on County Street enters the piping and tanks daily. This stored water meets TTHM levels when it leaves the water plant, but it could remain in the storage tanks for days. As a result, the TTHM level may rise, and we will have an exceedance of the acceptable standards.

The Town is in the process of addressing the TTHM problem. Our engineering team has designed a phased solution. Phase I is complete and operational as of July 2023. To combat the water age problem, new equipment has been installed in one of the storage tanks to aerate the water and mix it with incoming water, to prevent TTHM formation. Phase II contract has been awarded and construction is scheduled to commence in 2024. This will include a new booster pump station, updated distribution piping and valving in the high service "low pressure" zone.

As a result of the new work described above, we are experiencing TTHM level reductions at the actual sampling locations beginning September 2023 (Qtr. 3). However, MassDEP reporting requires that new results be averaged with previous results to determine reported TTHM. Unfortunately, previous TTHM levels have exceeded 80 ug/L so it may not be until March 2024 (Qtr. 1) until the reported average TTHM falls below 80 ug/L.

For more information, contact the Town of Somerset Water Department at 508-674-4215.

What should I do?

You can choose to limit the amount of tap water used if you are pregnant, may become pregnant or are giving water to young children². For example, you can use water from another source, such as bottled water. You can let water sit in a pitcher overnight to allow the TTHM chemicals to leave the water. Most TTHM are volatile and will easily evaporate from the water at room temperature.

While breast milk can be a source of TTHM exposure for infants, **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that nursing mothers continue to breastfeed their babies because of the numerous protective health benefits, despite the potential presence of environmental contaminants.**

You can also use home water filters to reduce exposure. (See MassDEP's TTHM in Drinking Water Information for Consumers Fact Sheet - <https://www.mass.gov/media/2532601/download>)

If you have questions about your water system's operation, water quality monitoring, or response to this issue, please contact the system operator directly. If you have questions about the drinking water regulations or health risks posed by these contaminants, you can contact the MassDEP Drinking Water Program at: program.director-dwp@mass.gov or 617-292-5770. If you have questions about specific symptoms, you can contact your doctor or other health care provider. If you have general questions about your health, you can contact the Massachusetts Department of Public Health at 617-624-5757. Further information is available in the MassDEP's TTHM in Drinking Water Information for Consumers Fact Sheet (<https://www.mass.gov/media/2532601/download>).

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 Town of Somerset Water Department

PWS ID#: 4273000

Date distributed: December 29, 2023

Phone: 508-674-4215

Email: cwickman@town.somerset.ma.us



¹ µg/L = (mg/L ÷ 1000)

² <https://www.mass.gov/doc/supporting-documentation-for-drinking-water-standards-and-guidelines/download>