IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER

The Town of Somerset’s water system was recently in violation of an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) drinking water standard. Although this is not an emergency, you have a right to know what has happened, what you should do and what is being done to correct the situation.

The Town of Somerset’s drinking water is disinfected with chlorine to kill bacteria. In addition to testing for bacteria in the distribution system, the water is also tested quarterly, at various sites throughout the distribution system for the presence of byproducts related to the disinfection process. The EPA sets standards for maximum levels of both disinfectants and disinfection byproducts (DBP's) in drinking water. This includes substances known as and collectively called Total Trihalomethanes or TTHM's.

The EPA Stage 2 DBP Rule which went into effect in 2012 requires water systems to meet "locational" running annual averages (LRAA) for Total Trihalomethanes at each of our four approved sampling locations. Historically since the early 1990's Somerset has had to report a combined running annual average of all samples collected in the distribution system and had met the EPA requirements. The compliance limits for TTHM'S are now calculated by averaging the quarterly results at each location. The LRAA results indicate that our system exceeded the maximum contaminate level for TTHM’S at one of four locations. The EPA standard for TTHM'S is 80 parts per billion (ppb). The LRAA value for the one location was 85 ppb. For reference, one part per billion is equivalent to one penny in ten million dollars.

What does this mean?
This is NOT an emergency, nor is there any imminent risk. If it had been an emergency situation, you would have been notified immediately through local media outlets. Some people who drink water containing Trihalomethanes in excess of the maximum contaminant level over many, many years may experience problems with their liver, kidneys or central nervous system and may have an increased risk of getting cancer. There are no known short-term acute impacts.

What should I do?
You DO NOT need to use an alternate water supply such as bottled water. However, if you have specific health concerns, please consult your doctor.

What happened? What is being done?
TTHM'S form when free chlorine reacts with naturally occurring organic matter in water over time. Lowering TTHM levels may be achieved by removing organic matter, as is now done by the Water Treatment Facility, by flushing to reduce water age and by adding additional treatment processes to remove TTHM'S from drinking water. SWD is working with an engineer to reduce water age, understand TTHM formation in our distribution system and evaluating treatment alternatives to achieve compliance.

The risks of health impacts from TTHM’S is much lower than the risk of illness from drinking water that has not been disinfected. At present we are conducting our semi-annual distribution system flushing and will continue with our water quality system flushing plan. We also continue to work with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and our engineering consultant on a long-term corrective action which will ensure continued compliance with the TTHM standards.

For additional information, please contact the Town of Somerset Water Department @ 508-674-4215 during regular business hours.

THIS PUBLIC NOTICE IS BEING DISTRIBUTED BY THE TOWN OF SOMERSET WATER DEPARTMENT PWS ID # 4273000 June 13, 2022
From time to time the Somerset Water Department has had to report that we have exceeded the allowable Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standard level for total trihalomethanes (TTHM). As explained in this Public Notice, the EPA’s standard for TTHM is 80 parts per billion (ppb). At one of our test site locations, our most recent testing level was 84 ppb, which is in violation of the EPA standard. Prior to 2012, communities were allowed to average TTHM levels taken from every site, which would typically yield an average TTHM lower than the 80 ppb standard. Since then, only the readings taken from each individual site were allowed to be averaged, making the standard harder to meet.

The new EPA regulations have caused many water departments and districts, including Somerset, to not meet standards. Accordingly, the Somerset Water Department has been actively engaged in TTHM remediation. We have had some success, but not on a consistent basis. Two major contributors to Somerset’s occasional exceedance of the TTHM level are the size of the water storage tanks and the age of our water treatment plant. The water storage tanks on Hot and Cold Lane were erected to accommodate the huge water demand of the two power plants that are no longer in operation. Presently, the tank size causes the treated water from the treatment plant to be retained for too long, resulting in the chemical reaction that causes elevated TTHM levels. Secondly, the water treatment plant is decades old and does not have the specialized equipment necessary for efficient total organic carbon (TOC) removal. TOC is one of the building blocks of TTHM formation. The Somerset Water Department has been working with Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MADEP) and our engineering consultants to solve the TTHM problem.

Initially, our engineering team prepared a list of options that would reduce TOC and TTHM to acceptable levels. The option selected in 2021 was the replacement of the original filter media with granular activated carbon (GAC). Although this option showed some promise, it was determined after a 6-month pilot study, to not be cost effective over time. The filter media would require replacement far more frequently than anticipated in order to produce consistent results. After further consideration, the option originally recommended by our engineers was selected for implementation. This option does have a higher capital cost but is the most cost effective for the long run. Known as the “Hot and Cold Lane Tank Modifications”, this option involves adding aeration and mixing equipment to one of the two storage tanks on Hot and Cold Lane to mitigate TTHM levels. The second storage tank will be taken out of regular service and used during high water consumption situations that may arise in the future, and for emergency water storage.

Presently, the Hot and Cold Lane Tank Modification option is nearing design completion and the Town is seeking funding options for this $4M project. Additionally, we are keeping MADEP informed of our progress. They have been very supportive as they monitor the course of this project. The Somerset Water and Sewer Board wishes to inform the Town that it is committed to implementing a long-term solution to ensure that TOC and TTHM levels consistently meet EPA standards.

Paul A. Sylvia, PE
Superintendent of Water and Sewer

PLEASE NOTE NEW WATER AND SEWER RATE STRUCTURE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023 WILL BE REFLECTED ON THE OCTOBER 2022 BILLS

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<th>Rate Description</th>
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NEW BILL FORMAT COMING IN OCTOBER 2022