

Michigan Section of the American Water Works Association
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Water professionals review proposed lead and copper regulations

Representatives from Michigan's water utilities met Nov. 8 to review Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's (MDEQ) proposed rules for lead and copper in drinking water during a meeting hosted by the Michigan Section, AWWA.

Earlier this fall, Gov. Rick Snyder asked MDEQ to develop new regulations that may be adopted as early as next year. Michigan Section AWWA spokesperson Randy Roost reminded attendees that the regulations are in a state of flux and that their comments will be relayed to the MDEQ stakeholder group comprised of utility, industrial, environmental and health care professionals, among others.

"This is about building consensus," he explained. "Consensus' does not mean everyone gets what they want – it means we find something we can all work with."

While the proposed regulations are wide ranging, they require heightened action and awareness from utilities, as well as faster response when lead is discovered in a water system. All of the attendees support the effort to ensure drinking water is free of dangerous levels of lead, copper and other contaminants, but expressed concerns about changes in testing requirements, the process of communicating lead levels with consumers, cost allocations and why Michigan is getting ahead of federal standards expected from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

For example, some Michigan water utility operators are concerned about the possibility that the EPA will ultimately issue stricter standards than what Michigan adopts, requiring local utilities to revamp their compliance plans to meet the future federal requirements.

The state's proposed 20-year timeline for utilities to remove pipes and other water-delivery equipment that contain lead or copper from their infrastructure could also prove difficult for many water systems to meet, some attendees said.

Some attendees also noted that the MDEQ is considering requiring municipalities to pick up the tab for replacing the pipes that connect a house to the public water supply, costs traditionally borne by property owners.

An updated draft of the MDEQ's proposed lead and copper rules is expected Nov. 29. A final stakeholders meeting is scheduled for December 5th to discuss any additional changes from the current draft.

The Michigan AWWA (MI-AWWA) is the state section of the American Water Works Association (AWWA). MI-AWWA is a vital community of nearly 1,700 water professionals in Michigan leading the advancement of water knowledge and improving the value and quality of water in our lives. AWWA is the largest nonprofit, scientific and educational association dedicated to managing and treating water, the world's most important resource.

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