



Oped for Detroit Free Press

by John Willemin, chair of the Board of Trustees for MI-AWWA Section

Be smart about tap water

On July 26, 2017 the Detroit Free Press published a story about contaminants found in tap water. The source of the story was a report issued by the Environmental Work Group (EWG) that paints a fearful and distorted picture of the safety of tap waters that are being provided to customers throughout the United States. As the statewide organization focused on improving the quality and value of Michigan's drinking water, we'd like to assure Michigan water utility customers that we are working diligently with water professionals across the state to provide tap water that meets the highest water quality standards.

Water utilities are required to comply with all Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Safe Drinking Water Act requirements to provide safe tap water to their customers. Indeed, Michigan Section – American Water Works Association members work hard to continuously improve their water service with many going beyond mere compliance to provide the best possible tap water that protects public health and ensures public safety, and to be responsible stewards of our precious water resources.

Each water utility publishes a Water Quality Report annually. In a Water Quality Report, water customers can find detailed information on contaminants. This is a publically available report that addresses known contaminants as required by current regulations. Although we commend EWG's effort in making information about water easily available through the use of technology, we caution consumers to get the full picture about their water by directly contacting their local water utility

Drinking water treatment processes vary depending on the source of the water (such as ground water, lakes, streams etc.) and other factors. Utilities across the State of Michigan conduct thousands of tests daily on their tap water to ensure that the water they produce is safe, meeting all federal guidelines. These guidelines have been developed with the

diverse input of communities, clinicians, allied health professionals, environmental advocates, and other engaged stakeholders. Drinking water standards are under constant review and new or emerging water quality concerns are continually under consideration for their impact on human health. Should EPA water quality guidelines be changed in the future to reflect new contaminant levels of concern, water utilities will modify their treatment processes to assure public health goals and compliance is achieved.

We encourage any water customer that has concerns regarding the quality of their drinking water to contact their local utility for clarification of the information provided either in their Water Quality Report or in the EWG report. Tap water filters can be useful and important tools when necessary and used properly. Providing safe, reliable, quality drinking water to customers remains and always will be a water utility's top priority.

It is important not to forget that water quality is best protected in the long-term by preventing source water contamination. Water customers can talk with the local water utility about the utility's site-specific source water or wellhead protection plan and how customers can support source water protection.

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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