

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

Albany County - New York

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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David VanLuven
Town Supervisor

George S. Kansas, P.E.
Commissioner

Public Notification About Your Drinking Water – Total THM Exceedances

March 18, 2019

Dear Bethlehem Water Customer,

This notice is to advise our customers that our water system is in noncompliance with the drinking water standard for Total Trihalomethanes (THMs). The Town has issued similar notices for the ongoing Total THM violations. Although this is *not an emergency*, we want you to know what has happened, what you can do, and what we are doing to correct the situation.

Federal and state laws require municipalities to monitor public drinking water supplies for more than 90 potential health risks. We consistently pass on all of these except one: THMs. THMs are disinfectant byproducts that occur at differing levels in all water systems treated with chlorine.

In accordance with state and federal protocols, we test for Total THMs on a quarterly basis (every three months) at four sampling sites selected by the NYS Dept. of Health that are most likely to have violations and represent the full extent of our water system. The results received on February 22, 2019 from samples collected during the first quarter of 2019 showed a Total THM violation at one of our four sites: Wemple Road (near River Road) in Selkirk. We collected and analyzed a second sample to confirm the first, with the results received on March 6, 2019. Both samples confirmed that the locational running average of samples collected during the last four quarters at the Wemple Road sample station were 96.9 parts per billion (ppb) for Total THMs (the Maximum Contaminant Level allowed is 80 ppb).

What does this mean?

This is not an emergency, nor does it pose an immediate risk. If it had been, you would have been notified immediately. The health risks of THMs occur over a lifetime of drinking the water, but it is important for people to know there are risks so they can understand the expensive investments we are making to eliminate them.

While the EPA, NYS Dept. of Health, and Albany County Health Dept. have all declared Bethlehem's water safe to drink for now, the Town is working closely with these agencies on improvements to ensure our water is safe to drink over our lifetimes.

That said, young children, pregnant women, and women of childbearing age may be more susceptible to effects from THM exposure. People who drink water containing THMs in excess of the Maximum Contaminant Level over many years may experience problems with their liver, kidneys, or central nervous system, and may have an increased risk of getting cancer.

You can get more information on health effects and precautions in our FAQs & Answers about Total THM Exceedances on the Town website (www.TownOfBethlehem.org) and the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hot Line at 1-800-426-4791.

What happened and what is Bethlehem doing about the situation?

THMs are byproducts of chlorine disinfection that form when chlorine combines with naturally organic matter in water. The levels of Total THMs vary depending factors including the amount of chlorine used, amount of organic material in water sources, temperature, and seasons. Our challenge is to control Total THM levels while also maintaining appropriate levels of disinfectant in the water to avoid bacterial issues. The Town is currently under an Administrative Order from the federal EPA to correct this violation, and the following actions to resolve the problem have been completed or are underway:

- Installation of water process improvements at the New Salem Water Treatment Plant (completed in 2013);
- Installation of a flushing station on Wemple Road to reduce water age at the line's dead end (completed 2016);
- Installation of a new water line to connect existing lines on River Road, thereby reducing the length of the dead end water main on Wemple Road (completed in 2019); and
- Construction of a new pre-treatment facility at the Clapper Road Water Treatment Plant to minimize the amount of chlorine added to our water (construction on this \$18 million project began this winter and completion is scheduled for Fall 2020).

If you have health questions about THMs in our drinking water, please contact:

Dr. Tom Brady

Assistant Director of Environmental Health
Albany County Health Department
(518) 447-4620
Thomas.Brady@albanycountyny.gov

We are happy to answer any questions you may have about our water, water system, monitoring, and construction projects. Please contact:

George Kansas, P.E.

Commissioner of Public Works
Town of Bethlehem
(518) 439-4955 option 4
gkansas@townofbethlehem.org

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.

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