Message

From: Kaiser, Steven [kaiser.steven@epa.gov]
Sent: 8/23/2017 5:17:08 PM
To: Carla Morgan [cmorgan@eastchicago.com]; Joe Allegretti [Joe@JoeAllegretti.com] [Joe@JoeAllegretti.com]; McCoy, Lisa [LMcCoy@idem.IN.gov]; Beth Admire [badmire@idem.IN.gov]
CC: Garypie, Catherine [garypie.catherine@epa.gov]; Arrazola, Ignacio [arrazola.ignacio@epa.gov]; Nelson, Leverett [nelson.leverett@epa.gov]
Subject: USS Lead - Press

East Chicago press clips
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NWI Times **Complete Coverage: East Chicago grapples with lead and arsenic for over a year**

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/complete-coverage-east-chicago-grapples-with-lead-and-arsenic-for/collection_c11ad793-5de7-5899-a9e8-317b0d3f1bb3.html

Complete Coverage: East Chicago grapples with lead and arsenic for over a year
Residents announce testing plan as officials answer questions about East Chicago water

- Sarah Reese sarah.reese@nwi.com, 219-933-3351
- Updated 15 hrs ago

EAST CHICAGO – City, state and federal officials sought to reassure residents the city's drinking water meets all requirements, but they admitted options are limited for eliminating all risk in a city where a majority of service lines contain at least some lead.
Some residents weren't satisfied with officials' answers and left the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's meeting to announce they've partnered with an industrial hygienist and Scott Smith, a controversial figure in the Flint, Michigan, water crisis, to conduct independent water testing.
The announcement came after presentations by EPA Region 5 Groundwater and Drinking Water Division Regulations Manager Miguel Del Toral and Indiana Department of Environmental Management Drinking Water Branch Chief Mary Hollingsworth. EPA found elevated lead levels in drinking water at 18 homes last fall and said the problem was likely systemwide, but IDEM conducted more sampling last spring and concluded the issue was not systemwide.
Del Toral said, "Is my water safe to drink?" sounds like a simple question, but the answer is complicated. There are many variables when dealing with lead lines, and the answer depends on whether residents are willing to accept some risk.
"Right now, we don't have the magic bullet to get down to what people want, which is no lead in the water," he said.
Lead in drinking water comes from lead and galvanized pipes and plumbing equipment, leaded solder and leaded brass in plumbing equipment. According to a service line information sheet on file with IDEM, an estimated 9,000 out of 11,000 lines in East Chicago contain at least some lead.
Del Toral repeated a recommendation he made in January, which is that residents in any city with lead pipes who want to avoid any risk should use a certified water filter. Filters cost about $8 a month, he said.
Del Toral said the recommendation is not based on anything unique to East Chicago, which immediately began making treatment adjustments after EPA found little to no trace in the system of a chemical added to water to prevent lead leaching.
"If you want to protect your family and not wait for treatment changes and effectiveness and not worry about all these other factors, it's peace of mind," Del Toral said.
Outside EPA's meeting, members of the Community Strategy Group said they were aware of intergovernmental disputes between the city, IDEM and EPA over drinking water during the past seven months.

"So now today it seems like folks are trying to get on the same page," said the Rev. Cheryl Rivera, of the Community Strategy Group. "We question that."

The Community Strategy Group has been working with other groups for months to deliver bottled water to residents at the Superfund site and Nicosia Senior Building.

Rivera introduced Peter Engelbert, an industrial hygienist, who said an initial screening sample indicated a need for more testing of East Chicago's water. The group is waiting on national funding and plans to conduct three years' of sampling, he said.

Engelbert declined further comment, and Smith said he would have to review results before discussing specifics about the initial screening.

The permanent solution would be to replace all lead and galvanized pipes and plumbing equipment, which can be expensive, officials said.

East Chicago has secured funding to replace up to 400 lead service lines in the USS Lead Superfund site. The contract recently was awarded to Hasse Construction, and work is scheduled to begin on Parrish Avenue in zone 3 of the site by Aug. 28, East Chicago Utilities Director Abdul Zehraoui said.

Residents who have their lines replaced may still be at risk if the plumbing inside their home contains lead or galvanized pipes, lead solder or leaded brass. East Chicago is replacing resident-owned pipes up to the water meter at the home, but indoor plumbing remains the residents' responsibility, the city said.

IDEM Commissioner Bruno Pigott said IDEM is comfortable with its approach to mitigating health risks. The department distributed water filters in the Superfund site, where excavation work could cause lead in water lines to flake off and enter the water supply, and is working with East Chicago on the lead line replacement project.

"Whether it's East Chicago, Gary, Indianapolis, Evansville — you go north to south in this state, there are lead service lines," Pigott said. "The state, EPA and the city have devoted a lot more time and a lot more energy to addressing the issue of lead in drinking water in this city than any other city around the state, period. And it will be to the benefit of all residents of East Chicago."

Sincerely,

Steven P. Kaiser
Office of Regional Counsel
United States Environmental Protection Agency
77 West Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois 60604
(312) 353 - 3804