

# DRINKING WATER NOTICE

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER

### **NASA – Wallops Flight Facility Main Base Did Not Meet Treatment Requirements**

Wallops Flight Facility (WFF) violated a Virginia Department of Health (VDH) drinking water standard for low chlorine levels in the Main Base drinking water system from January 19 to 20, 2021. Although this was not an emergency, as a WFF customer, you have a right to know what happened, what WFF did to correct this situation, and what you should do.

WFF monitors its drinking water for residual chlorine levels at several points in the distribution system daily to determine if primary and secondary disinfection meets Virginia Department of Health drinking water standards. These standards require WFF to maintain a residual chlorine level of 0.16 milligrams per liter (mg/L) at the entry point of the water distribution system to assure 4-log inactivation of viruses. On January 19th and January 20th, 2021, the entry point chlorine level was found to be below 0.16 mg/L in the morning, though levels were back above 0.16 mg/L in the early afternoon.

#### **What does this mean?**

The reduced chlorine level does not present an immediate human health effect. However, reduced chlorine levels can allow organisms (bacteria, viruses, and parasites) to develop over time, which can impact human health. Those impacts may include symptoms such as nausea, cramps, diarrhea, and associated headaches. However, these symptoms are not only caused by organisms in drinking water. If you experience any of these symptoms and they persist, you may want to seek medical advice.

#### **What happened? What was done?**

The low chlorine levels were caused by malfunctioning of the chlorine metering pump that doses chlorine into the water supply. While the cause of this malfunction is not certain, there were two drinking water line breaks that were identified on January 15<sup>th</sup> and January 19<sup>th</sup> due to colder weather creating freeze/thaw cycles. Line breaks often cause rapid, high volume water loss that can trigger additional pumping from wells and extra exertion on the chlorine injection system.

WFF promptly collected bacteriological samples of the drinking water system at both line break sites after repairs were made, which showed no indications of coliform bacteria contamination. Maintenance was performed on the chlorine metering pump and chlorine residuals were back above required levels at the distribution point by the afternoon of January 20<sup>th</sup>. Chlorine levels were maintained at other occupied sites on the Main Base throughout this timeframe.

#### **What should I do?**

- You do not need to boil your water or take other actions. WFF did not observe any bacterial contamination, and none of the follow-up testing has shown disease-causing organisms in the drinking water.
- People with severely compromised immune systems, infants, and some elderly may be at increased risk for negative health effects if exposed to microbes in drinking water. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by microbes occasionally present in drinking water are available from EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1(800) 426-4791.

For more information on this matter, please contact Mr. R. Owen Hooks, WFF Water Programs, at 757-824-1941 or [Richard.O.Hooks@nasa.gov](mailto:Richard.O.Hooks@nasa.gov).

*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, mail or email.*

This notice is being sent to you by NASA Goddard Space Flight Center / Wallops Flight Facility.  
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