



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS BALTIMORE DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
BALTIMORE DISTRICT
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Brief Filter Problem at the McMillan Water Treatment Plant

Washington, DC. -- The Washington Aqueduct's McMillan Water Treatment Plant briefly did not meet the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standard for filtered water turbidity on Dec. 22, 2008. Turbidity is a measure of the cloudiness of the water. The standard is for filtered water to be consistently at or below 1.0 turbidity units. During a 14-minute period in the evening of Dec. 22, this limit was exceeded by a small amount because of the malfunction of the filter valves. Washington Aqueduct continually analyzes and records filtered water turbidity, which made it possible to detect the problem immediately and take action to overcome the equipment problem that created it.

EPA Region III, regulating agency for Washington Aqueduct, determined that this event constituted a violation of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, requiring notification to customers within 30 days. This event did not require immediate public notification or any specific action by the public.

Turbidity has no health effects; however, turbidity can interfere with disinfection and acts as an indicator that disease-causing organisms may have been able to pass through the filters. The short duration of this event and the relatively small amount of inadequately filtered water combined to minimize the risk to consumers. The treatment plant quickly returned to normal operation, and the water produced subsequently by Washington Aqueduct meets all EPA standards.

Washington Aqueduct provides wholesale water service to the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (DC WASA), Arlington County and the City of Falls Church service area in Virginia. Washington Aqueduct alerted each of its wholesale customers on Dec. 23 and, on Dec. 30, provided them the official written notice attached to this news release. Each of the wholesale customers will, in turn, send a notification to their potentially affected customers, and the event will be recorded in the annual Consumer Confidence Report.

Systems affected include DC WASA, the City of Falls Church water system, the Willston area water system in Arlington and the Town of Vienna's water system. Both the Willston and Town of Vienna systems are directly served via the City of Falls Church's water system.

"We regret any inconvenience and concern that this event has caused our customers," said Tom Jacobus, general manager of Washington Aqueduct. "The safe and reliable operation of the water treatment plants is our highest priority."

For more information, contact Tom Jacobus, general manager of the Washington Aqueduct, at (202) 764-0031 or Thomas.P.Jacobus@usace.army.mil.

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Attached: Notification Letter

Washington Aqueduct Exceeded Turbidity Standard

An equipment problem caused elevated turbidity on December 22, 2008 in water produced by the McMillan Water Treatment Plant. Continuous monitoring enabled us to detect and resolve the problem within 14 minutes. The problem began when in the automatic mode, the filter effluent valves opened wider than expected. It was resolved by the operator assuming manual control of the filters and closing the effluent valves to the proper setting. The short duration of the elevated turbidity reduces the public health risk, but it is very important to read the following information. This is not an emergency. If it had been, you would have been notified immediately. You do not need to boil your water or take other actions.

Normal turbidity levels at the McMillan Water Treatment Plant are less than 0.1 turbidity units. A water sample taken December 22 showed levels of greater than 1 turbidity unit. This was above the regulatory standard of 1 turbidity unit. Because of these high levels of turbidity, there is an increased chance that the water may have contained disease-causing organisms.

Turbidity has no health effects. However turbidity can interfere with disinfection and provide a medium for microbial growth. Turbidity may indicate the presence of disease-causing organisms. These organisms include bacteria, viruses, and parasites that can cause symptoms such as nausea, cramps, diarrhea, and associated headaches.

Individuals with extremely compromised immune systems may have been at an increased risk of gastrointestinal illness. Anyone that has concerns should contact their health care provider.

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.

For more information, please write to Mr. Thomas Jacobus, General Manager of the Washington Aqueduct, 5900 MacArthur Boulevard, NW, Washington, D.C. 20016. The phone number is 202-764-0031. email: thomas.p.jacobus@usace.army.mil.

This notice is being sent to you by Washington Aqueduct, Public Water System ID#: DC0000001.

Date distributed: December 30, 2008.