

NORTH PENN WATER AUTHORITY

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PUBLIC DRINKING WATER NOTICE TO NORTH PENN WATER AUTHORITY'S EAST ROCKHILL CUSTOMERS

***ESTE INFORME CONTIENE INFORMACIÓN IMPORTANTE ACERCA DE SU
AGUA POTABLE. HAGA QUE ALGUIEN LO TRADUZCA PARA USTED,
O HABLE CON ALGUIEN QUE LO ENTIENDA.***

The North Penn Water Authority (NPWA) wants to assure our customers in East Rockhill Township that the water we are currently delivering, and will continue to deliver in the future, meets all of the very strict water quality standards and regulations required by the federal and state governments. However, we want to notify our East Rockhill customers that the Authority did have to shut down one of our two wells in the township on September 12, 2016. This notice explains why we had to take that action and what we are doing in response to that situation.

What happened recently?

We received laboratory data on September 12, 2016 confirming that levels of perfluorinated compounds (PFCs) were found at slightly elevated levels. The Health Advisory Level (HAL) for the combination of perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), collectively known as PFCs, is 70 parts per trillion (ppt). We measured a level of 117 ppt in our well NP-74 and a level of 65 ppt in our well NP-73 in East Rockhill. Anything less than 70 ppt is considered to be acceptable by both the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP). We will resample these wells to confirm the results and will continue to monitor the situation.

Testing of public groundwater wells for PFCs was done as part of the federal Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR3). As such, these compounds are not currently regulated by the government and there are no drinking water standards established for compliance. Rather, there is only a Health Advisory Level (HAL) established which, as the name implies, is advisory only. Because of the small size of the East Rockhill system which serves 194 residential customers, NPWA was not required by the UCMR3 to test these wells for PFCs. However, due to the recent detections of PFOA and PFOS in nearby communities, in an abundance of caution the Authority voluntarily sampled the wells in order to be proactive.

What should you do?

There is nothing that our customers in East Rockhill need to do in response to this occurrence, since NPWA is responding by taking all the appropriate actions that are necessitated by this situation. Our customers in East Rockhill can continue to use their water as normal.

What response actions are being taken?

The one well that was found to be above the health advisory level was shut down and removed from service by NPWA on the same day that the Authority received the laboratory data. The Authority's plan of action going forward is that we are activating the existing interconnection that we have with the neighboring Perkasio Regional Authority so that NPWA can purchase water from their distribution system to deliver to our East Rockhill customers. Fortunately, the testing previously done by Perkasio on their source water wells has indicated that PFCs were not detected. This is why public water systems are proactive in establishing standby interconnections with neighboring water suppliers wherever feasible, so that we can offer each other assistance such as this, when necessary. After the Perkasio interconnection is activated, then the second one of the two NPWA wells will also be shut down, and all the water distributed to our East Rockhill customers will be coming from the Perkasio system. NPWA has been in contact with the PA DEP regarding this matter and the Authority is collaborating with the guidance offered by the regulatory officials.

NPWA's use of the Perkasio interconnection is a short-term solution to the situation. The Authority is actively investigating a variety of other long-term options for supplying water to our East Rockhill customers to determine which of several other alternatives are most feasible, both operationally and financially, for the future.

What areas are affected?

This Public Drinking Water Notice relates only to the 194 customers of the North Penn Water Authority located in East Rockhill Township in upper Bucks County. It does not affect the approximately 34,000 customers that NPWA serves in several other municipalities in Montgomery and Bucks Counties. All NPWA customers outside of the East Rockhill satellite system are served by a completely separate water distribution system from different water sources, unconnected to East Rockhill, consisting of surface water from the Forest Park water treatment plant and other local groundwater wells, all of which have been tested. Those results indicate no problems with PFC's in those water sources.

What is the recent background of this subject?

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), the North Penn Water Authority monitors the quality of water from all our sources. We sample as required for substances for which the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) has set primary drinking water standards. As we report to all our customers in our annual Consumer Confidence Report (CCR), all of the Authority's water sources meet the primary drinking water standards with no water quality violations.

There are some contaminants for which the EPA develops health advisories, but have not yet established regulatory limits for compliance by public water suppliers. The health advisories provide technical information on health effects. Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) are included in those contaminants that have no regulatory limit but are associated with a health advisory. These chemicals are among a family of manmade chemicals that have been used for decades as an ingredient to make products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease and water, and in foam products for firefighting. They are extremely resistant to breaking down in the environment.

PFOS and PFOA are persistent in the environment and it is estimated by health officials that these compounds are present in the blood of most people in the United States. Studies indicate that exposure to PFOS and PFOA over certain levels may result in adverse effects, including developmental effects, such as low birth weight, to fetuses during pregnancy or breastfed infants, testicular and/or kidney cancer, liver tissue damage, immune and thyroid effects and other effects such as cholesterol changes.

In 2009, EPA published provisional health advisories for PFOA and PFOS. At the time they were established 7 years ago, these advisories were as follows: 200 parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOS and 400 parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOA. In May 2016, EPA replaced the 2009 provisional advisories with new, lifetime health advisories that combined the two chemicals and set a 70 parts per trillion (ppt) health advisory level for the sum total of both compounds, collectively known as PFCs.

It should be reiterated that the health advisory level of 70 ppt was established only four months ago by the EPA. Prior to May, 2016, the acceptable level of PFCs, for a combination of PFOS and PFOA, was much higher, as noted above. So the levels currently measured in some nearby communities, including NPWA's wells in East Rockhill, would have been considered well within the acceptable range before the regulations were changed to make them more stringent. This is why this issue was not a concern in the recent past. With even more wells needing to be shut down in nearby communities, it has become a concern now, prompting the Authority to take action by shutting down our wells and issuing this public notice.

Where can you get more information?

More information on this subject from the EPA and PA Department of Health is enclosed with this notice. If you have specific health concerns, you should consult with a healthcare professional, such as your family doctor. Please also share this information with the people in your home or business who drink the water.

For any further questions regarding this matter, please visit NPWA's website at www.npwa.org, or call the Authority's Customer Service Department at 215-855-3617 between the hours of 8:00 am and 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Thank you for your understanding of the situation.

*This notice is being sent by the North Penn Water Authority
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