

Updated FAQs for West Virginia American Water Kanawha Valley Customers

What are the levels of MCHM at the Kanawha Valley Water Treatment Plant?

Tests results show that MCHM readings in the plant's raw water and finished water have been non-detectable since Monday evening, January 13.

How can West Virginia American Water be confident our water is safe at the level of 1 part per million (ppm) of MCHM, especially when questions have been raised about how this level was determined?

On January 10, 2014, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provided the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) with recommendations from CDC scientists who recommended an acceptable threshold of 1 ppm. Officials from DHHR's Bureau for Public Health and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reviewed the CDC's recommendations and concurred with the 1 ppm level before we developed the protocols for lifting the water ban. On January 15, the CDC scientists reaffirmed 1 ppm as a "protective level to prevent adverse health effects."

Although West Virginia American Water does not set water quality standards, our responsibility is to follow the rules and guidelines established by federal and state regulatory agencies, such as the CDC, EPA, West Virginia DHHR's Bureau for Public Health and the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection. This is a responsibility we take very seriously.

If the CDC is warning pregnant women not to drink the water, should I also have health concerns about using water for normal uses?

We understand that the CDC issued its recommendation for pregnant women "due to limited availability of data and out of an abundance of caution." At the same time, CDC said "scientists continue to recommend 1 parts per million (ppm) as a protective level to prevent adverse health effects."

If you have more questions about health risks, please contact the Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

In addition to pregnant women, should people with immune system deficiencies also consider drinking only bottled water? Or nursing mothers, or parents using tap water to make baby formula?

For these health-related questions and concerns, you should contact the Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 or contact your physician. Here are FAQs from DHHR to address many health-related issues: <http://www.wvdhhr.org/wvbphCDCfaq.pdf>.

If the water still smells like “licorice,” how can people be sure it’s safe?

The odor is an aesthetics issue, not a health risk. Although the odor might linger, we want customers to understand that odors can be detected at levels far below what the CDC has determined is protective of the public health.

Is the water harmful to pets?

These questions should be directed to the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, or your veterinarian.

The CDC recommended that pregnant women drink bottled water until the chemical is at non-detectable levels in the distribution system. What does non-detectable mean?

Any test result labeled "non-detectable" is below the analytical capability of the instrument and method used to measure it.

West Virginia American Water's Huntington Laboratory is a member of ORSANCO's Organics Detection System. As a member of this group, the Huntington facility has the expertise and technology to identify the presence of many chemical compounds and is able to detect levels of this contaminant as low as 10 parts per billion, or 0.010 parts per million. Samples from the Kanawha Valley Water Treatment Plant have been transported to our Huntington Laboratory and outside labs for analysis.

When does West Virginia American Water expect to reach the non-detectable level in its distribution system?

At this time, we are not able to provide a timetable because all our focus has been on lifting the water ban for the remaining areas and restoring normal water service. However, we continue to conduct sampling throughout the distribution system to help us determine when we will reach non-detectable levels.

What steps will West Virginia American Water be taking to reach non-detectable levels of MCHM, and will you be providing updates on your progress?

We will continue to perform sampling at the treatment plant and at multiple points across our distribution system. Test results consistently show the levels of MCHM trending down. In fact, the levels in the plant's raw water and finished water have been non-detectable since Monday evening, January 13.

We will continue to work with our interagency partners to restore the customers' confidence in the quality of the water, and we will communicate the efforts we are making to achieve non-detectable levels of MCHM throughout the system.