

FAQs About the Haloacetic Acids Public Notice

BCWSA staff work diligently to deliver the highest quality drinking water to its customers. We invest in replacing and upgrading aging infrastructure and continuously make improvements to ensure that we meet upcoming water regulations. Sometimes circumstances beyond our control may affect the quality of the drinking water. On December 20, 2017 a public notice was issued for one such instance. All testing performed since that date show that individual results are acceptable, however compliance is based on a locational running annual average (LRAA) of quarterly samples. We are required to inform customers every quarter that the LRAA is over 60ppb, so a second public notice was issued on March 22, 2018. This is not an emergency situation, and you may continue to drink the water. Below are some answers to some frequently asked questions about the public notice that was issued.

Am I in the area affected by this public notice?

If you receive water from BCWSA and reside in the Langhorne, Lower Southampton area, then you are within the affected area. If you do not receive your drinking water from BCWSA, you are not affected. If you receive your water from BCWSA but are in the New Hope area, you are not affected - the source of your water is a different supply and the public notice does not apply to you. If you are unsure if this notice applies to you, please call us at 215-343-2538 to determine if you are within the service area affected by this notice.

Why is there a drinking water violation?

Chlorine is used in the water supply to kill harmful bacteria and viruses. When the chlorine is added to the water, it combines with naturally occurring organic and inorganic materials present in the source water and forms chemicals called disinfection byproducts (DBPs). The EPA sets standards for controlling the levels of these DBPs, including Total Trihalomethanes (THMs) and Haloacetic Acids (HAAs). The regulations require us to test for THMs and HAAs on a quarterly basis and report a Locational Running Annual Average (LRAA), meaning the results from the four previous quarters are averaged for each location and this number must not exceed the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL). So a high result can affect the yearly average even if results from three other quarters are lower. This is what happened in our system – HAA results from the fourth quarter of 2017 were high and when calculated, the LRAA for two sites exceeds the MCL.

All testing results received after November 2017 show individual HAA results under the limit of 60ppb, however the LRAA will continue to exceed the MCL due to the fourth quarter of 2017 results being higher than usual. We are required to inform customers every quarter that the LRAA is over 60ppb, so a public notice will continue to be issued until the calculated LRAA drops below 60ppb even though current individual results are under 60ppb.

What is the Maximum Contaminant Level for HAAs and what was the level in my water?

The maximum contaminant level (MCL) for HAAs is 60ppb. Our results are shown in the chart below.

Site ID	Second Quarter Sampled May 2017	Third Quarter Sampled August 2017	Fourth Quarter Sampled November 2017	First Quarter Sampled February 2018	Locational Running Annual Average
702	68.8	17.5	6.88	9.59	25.7
704	73.2	9.31	6.64	9.94	24.8
711	12.1	8.58	8.71	11.5	10.2
712	23.6	9.09	8.37	16.4	14.4
713	37.5	37.8	102	9.60	46.7
714	45.2	36.0	157	23.5	65.4
715	33.0	5.65	33.9	52.3	31.2
716	75.7	9.46	151	31.2	66.8

What are HAAs and what are their health effects?

Haloacetic acids are carboxylic acids where a halogen atom takes the place of a hydrogen atom in acetic acid. EPA regulates monochloroacetic acid, dichloroacetic acid, trichloroacetic acid, monobromoacetic acid, and dibromoacetic acid by setting an MCL for the sum of the concentrations of these five individual HAAs. They are known as HAAs or HAA5. The amount of HAAs in drinking water changes from day to day and is dependent on the season, water temperature, water age, amount of disinfectant added, the amount of organic materials in the source water, and a variety of other factors. The main exposure to HAAs is through consumption – the human body’s skin acts as a protectant and helps to prevent HAAs from being readily absorbed through the skin while washing. People who consume large volumes of drinking water containing HAAs in excess of the MCL over many years may have an increased risk of cancer. The MCL of 60ppb is based on long-term exposure from drinking two liters (about two quarts) of water every day for seventy years. It is important to note that for this exposure to have significant effects, two things must occur: the MCL must be over the limit and a person must consume a steady amount at the high level over many years.

What should I do?

You do not need to use an alternative or bottled water supply. However, if you have specific health concerns, consult your doctor.

What is BCWSA doing about this?

Our source for the water in this portion of the system is supplied by Lower Bucks County Joint Municipal Authority. We have met with them to discuss possible ways to lower DBPs. We have also installed automatic flushing stations in our system to help reduce water age. As a long term solution, we are working on installing mixers in our storage tanks.

What should I do if I have more questions?

If you'd like to do some research on the web, the American Water Works Association has a website at www.drinktap.org that has some information on HAAs. You can also find information on EPA's website at www.epa.gov. As always, you can give us a call at 215-343-2538 and we can assist you in getting the information you need.