CITY OF IRONDALE WATER SYSTEM – PFAS UPDATE

April 8, 2024

The City of Irondale Water System ("IWS") is committed to continuously providing safe, potable water to the citizens of Irondale. IWS is also committed to providing our customers with transparent and timely updates related to the emerging PFAS issue.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR OUR CUSTOMERS:

On May 19, 2016, EPA issued lifetime health advisories for two PFAS substances: perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS). PFAS stands for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, a group of thousands of man-made chemical compounds in use since the 1940s to make products resistant to high temperatures, water, and stains. The advisories were not regulatory but provided information on human health effects from a lifetime of exposure to PFOA and PFOS from drinking water. The health advisory level was a combined 70 parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOA and PFOS.

PFOA and PFOS are two PFAS compounds with evidence of negative adverse health effects after exposure at very low concentrations. PFOA and PFOS were phased out of production by most U.S. manufacturers in the mid-2000s. However, PFOA and PFOS can still be imported into the U.S. through consumer products, and continued PFAS production and use can lead to discoveries in soil, air, and drinking water sources.

An individual's exposure to these PFAS can vary due to a number of factors. Beyond drinking water, PFAS exposure can come from consumer products such as cookware, cosmetics, food wrappings, stain/water-resistant clothing, carpet and furniture treatments, and even dental floss and toilet paper. Additionally, people can be exposed to PFAS by eating certain foods such as fish that may contain PFAS.

In 2016, at ADEM's request, IWS tested its water supply for PFOA and PFOS. These chemicals were found in the water supply, but were lower than the 2016 EPA Health Advisory.

On March 14, 2023, the EPA announced the first-ever national proposed national drinking water standards – also known as Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) - for PFOA and PFOS. The EPA also proposed an enforceable MCL on a combination of four more PFAS compounds: PFNA, PFHxS, PFBS, and HFPO-DA (otherwise known as GenX). This proposed standard would place limits on any water containing a mixture of one or more of these four compounds. The "Hazard

Index" formula will be utilized to determine if the combined levels of these four PFAS pose a potential risk.

The EPA's announcement started a public comment period and scientific review processes that should be finalized in the near future. After these processes are complete, the EPA's final drinking water standards will be announced. These may differ from the proposed MCLs and Hazard Index that were announced in March.

When EPA issues the final MCLs and Hazard Index, it will also announce an effective date set in the future so water providers have time to meet the new standards. The effective date for the final MCLs and Hazard Index is expected to be three years after the final standards are established. IWS has decided to use the proposed MCLs are guidance until the final MCLs are announced.

PFAS cannot be removed from drinking water through conventional methods. The only known effective methods for removing PFAS are Reverse Osmosis and Granular Activated Carbon, both of which are expensive technologies that IWS does not have. Currently, IWS can only employ other temporary measures to decrease the levels in the drinking water, which IWS has done and continues to do. Even though no MCL has been announced, IWS takes this issue seriously and has already started taking action to determine the extent of the PFAS in its water supply and methods to remove PFAS from the water supply. Specifically, IWS has done the following:

First, in addition to testing the drinking water, IWS has also tested each individual well that provides drinking water to our ratepayers, in an attempt to isolate where the PFAS are originating from. We will continue to test and monitor these wells, as well as the finished drinking water.

Second, IWS has analyzed and utilized the best combination of its wells at any given time in order to provide the drinking water with the lowest possible levels of PFAS, and will continue to do so.

Third, IWS has been working with a hydrogeologist to assist in determining the source or sources of the PFAS in Irondale's drinking water.

Fourth, IWS has been consulting with water quality engineers to come up with a solution that includes both temporary and permanent measures to remove PFAS from IWS's water supply.

Fifth, IWS has hired legal counsel to investigate and pursue litigation against the entities responsible for the PFAS in IWS's water supply, so the cost of removing PFAS is not born by IWS's ratepayers.

Currently, IWS is employing every temporary mitigation technique at its disposal to reduce the levels of PFAS in the drinking water. We will continue to do so as our investigation continues and we receive new information. We believe that our past actions have already decreased the amount of PFAS in the drinking water and will be testing in the near future to confirm. Although IWS is taking temporary measures to decrease the PFAS in the drinking water supply, IWS is also looking into permanent treatment options to remove all of the PFAS from the drinking water supply.

As a customer, you have the right to be informed on this matter and that IWS is taking immediate measures to mitigate any associated risks. We value you as a customer, and our commitment is to provide you with a safe water supply at the lowest cost possible. Please note that any further updates on the PFAS issue will be posted on IWS's website at: https://cityofirondaleal.gov/departments/water-works/.