



"RE-BUILDING THE CITY'S WATER SYSTEMS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY"

Sewerage & Water Board OF NEW ORLEANS

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For Media Inquiries Only

Sewerage & Water Board Responds to NBC News Report

New Orleans' Water is Thoroughly Treated, Monitored Regularly and Safe to Drink According to all Existing Standards

NEW ORLEANS - In response to an NBC Report on the possibility of changing lead and federal water standards, the Sewerage and Water Board (S&WB) today reiterated that its testing meets all national regulatory standards and that lead levels are well below the guidelines.

S&WB Executive Director said: "The S&WB provides safe, high quality drinking water and works in close coordination with the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to monitor and ensure public safety. Based on historical testing, we are confident that should the federal water standards change, our lead levels will remain below the guidelines."

While it is true that lead service lines do exist in New Orleans like most of the country, the water is pure and safe to drink.

As S&WB has reiterated in the past, there is no lead in the water leaving from the S&WB treatment plant or in the system's distribution lines. S&WB utilizes a corrosion control treatment program to help prevent lead from leaching into the water from the service lines and customers' plumbing. S&WB adds a protective coating, called calcium hydroxide, to the interior of the lines in the system to create a barrier between the metal pipes and the water traveling through. The sampling in Orleans Parish that was reported in the NBC News story comes from homes with known lead service lines and/or copper plumbing with lead solder.

EPA regulations indicate that 90 percent of the homes sampled must have no greater than 15 parts per billion (ppb) of lead in the drinking water. Samples are collected on both the east and west banks of New Orleans: for the east bank, the 90th percentile is 6ppb and for the west bank, the 90th percentile is 2ppb. Samples in New Orleans have consistently been below EPA's action levels and as a result, Louisiana DHH has reduced the monitoring frequency to once every three years. The next monitoring period begins later this summer, where S&WB is committed to increasing the number of homes tested beyond EPA requirements.

State and EPA regulations also indicate how and when to notify the public about water-related issues. The S&WB follows all EPA and DHH regulations and guidelines in terms of both the frequency of public notifications and the language in those notifications. At a minimum, the S&WB publishes and distributes a consumer confidence report to every customer annually by US mail, which is also published on the website. S&WB recently included an insert in a monthly mailing about the water in Orleans Parish and with tips for reducing lead in water.

If a home or business was constructed before 1987, lead plumbing or solder may exist inside the structure and/or between the meter and the structure. If that is the case, customers may call 52-WATER and S&WB will replace the entire lead service from the water main to the meter. It is the homeowner's responsibility to replace any lead service lines that exist between the water meter and your property.

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