



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**  
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*Customers inquire about possible parallels between City's and Flint's Water System*

# **Grand Rapids Water System provides answers to consumer questions**

**GRAND RAPIDS, MI** – The City of Grand Rapids Water System continues to consistently meet the challenge and responsibility for providing safe, quality water which meets or exceeds the requirements set forth by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. The System proudly serves residential and commercial customers in Ada Township, Cascade Charter Township, City of Grand Rapids, City of East Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids Charter Township, City of Kentwood, Tallmadge Charter Township, City of Walker and portions of Ottawa County.

The City's water, piped in directly from Lake Michigan, is high-quality and meets or exceeds all water-safety testing requirements. Providing the purist, high-quality water to our customers is a responsibility that its operators take very seriously. The system recognizes the importance of this pledge to its customers and supporting the region's world-renown food and beverage industries, as well as other commercial water-users.

To sustain consumer confidence in how the City produces and delivers excellent water to its customers that will protect public health, support the economy, protect life and property from the threat of fire and contribute to West Michigan's overall quality of life, the City issues an annual Water Quality Report and mails it directly to every customer address. These annual reports are also available on the City's Web site: [grcity.us/water](http://grcity.us/water)

Due to the tragic events in Flint involving its water system, the Grand Rapids Water System is providing Questions and Answers to many common questions that Grand Rapids customers might have about their local system. Those customers who would like additional information can

call Grand Rapids Customer Service at 311. Those who are unable to dial 311 or live outside Grand Rapids' city limits can call (616) 456-3000.

*Question:*

**How do I know our water is safe?**

*Answer:*

The City of Grand Rapids Water System conducts numerous types of tests and monitoring to ensure safe, high quality water. Some monitoring is continuous or hourly for operations oversight, other tests are done on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis.

*Question:*

**Does our water have high levels of lead in it like the City of Flint's?**

*Answer:*

No. In its last round of testing, no samples exceeded the action level of 15 parts per billion and the 90th percentile level was 2.2 ppb. Grand Rapids has added a phosphate compound for more than 20 years for corrosion control and to minimize amounts of lead and copper that may come from service lines and internal plumbing. Since initiating this corrosion control, Grand Rapids has been in full compliance with lead and copper regulations.

*Question:*

**Does anti-corrosion treatment at the water plant reduce any potential leaching problem before it starts?**

*Answer:*

The City of Grand Rapids' corrosion control treatment reduces corrosion and provides a protective barrier all the way through the municipal water system that extends into service lines and interior plumbing; basically anywhere its water goes.

As a result, Grand Rapids has been in full compliance with the lead and copper regulations since they were established in the early 1990s.

*Question:*

**Where does the lead that can be in drinking water come from?**

*Answer:*

The issues with lead in water systems are almost exclusively due to the lead service lines between the street and the house and, in some cases, interior plumbing and fixtures inside the house. So, the Lead and Copper regulations that were enacted in 1992 did take that fact into consideration when corrosion control and testing requirements were established.

Grand Rapids Water System testing is done at the customer's indoor faucet, so it, in fact, is getting test results that show what may be leaching from the lead service line and as well as indoor plumbing. The System's most recent 90th percentile test result is 2.2 parts per billion (ppb), well below the 15 ppb action level in the regulation.

*Question:*

**How does the City test for lead?**

*Answer:*

Test protocol requires samples be taken at the customer's faucet after a minimum six-hour stagnation time. Testing requires the customer to take the sample either first thing in the morning or after returning home from work, if the house has been vacant during the day. This way residents can assure that there has been no usage during the six-hour period. The Water System provides homeowners with training on how to collect the sample and a clean certified sample bottle that they are to use. It identifies the faucet to be used, and provides a sample collection form that residents must complete. The System will then pick up the sample later that day from the customer's home. It works closely with the customer to assure that the sample was properly collected and ask that they contact water officials with any questions, uncertainty or concerns that the sample may have been improperly collected. The Water System will take that information and determine if the sample should be discarded and a re-sample scheduled. The Water System carefully selects the homes for sampling to meet the requirements of the Lead and Copper regulation and those that are representative of homes that could be at risk for exposure.

*Question:*

**I understand that some of the trouble in Flint happened in the water service lines between water mains and residences. In Grand Rapids, who is responsible for those service lines?**

*Answer:*

The City is responsible for the portion of the service line in the street from the water main to the shut off, or curb stop, generally located near the property line. The homeowner is responsible for the remainder of the service line on private property into the home.

*Question:*

**Given what has happened in Flint, does the City plan to replace these service lines?**

*Answer:*

Although not required to, Grand Rapids replaces its portion of lead service lines whenever they leak, break or are exposed by construction projects or if requested by a property owner who is

also replacing their portion of the service line. Grand Rapids will also finance the property owner's portion of the lead service line replacement cost if requested. Grand Rapids will pay the plumber's bill for the property owner's portion upon completion and collect it back from the property owner over a ten-year period under an agreement with the owner. Additionally, water staff has been meeting over the years with the Healthy Homes Coalition and Kent County Health Department to work towards solutions to facilitate replacement of lead service lines.

*Question:*

**How many lead service lines are in the city, and how many service lines are there overall?**

*Answer:*

There are approximately 17,000 lead service lines in the system, and it has approximately 80,000 service lines total, including its entire retail service area. In 2015 the Water System replaced approximately 100 service lines in coordination with customer replacements or because of City-side leaks/breaks. The number it replaces, in connection with construction projects, varies from year-to-year depending on the number of projects and associated lead services.

*Question:*

**How old are those lead service lines?**

*Answer:*

Lead was discontinued as a service line material around 1930, so that means that most lead services are 85 years old or more.

*Question:*

**If someone is concerned about their water, can they ask/pay to have the water system test it?**

*Answer:*

Before having any testing done, customers may want to consult with the Kent County Health Department to discuss their specific concerns. As with lead in particular, there are other concerns, such as lead-based paint which may be found in older homes. Healthy Homes Coalition is another great resource. Homeowners should speak to one of these agencies first to better understand their concerns before getting water tests done. Of course, they can also contact Grand Rapids Customer Service at 311. Those who are unable to dial 311 or live outside Grand Rapids' city limits can call (616) 456-3000.

Kent County Health Department, Environmental Health Services, (616) 632-6900,  
[https://www.accesskent.com/Health/health\\_department.htm](https://www.accesskent.com/Health/health_department.htm)

Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan, (616) 241-3300,  
<http://www.healthyhomescoalition.org/>

There are private drinking water laboratories in this area that property owners can contact to have their water tested for any specific parameters, or the State of Michigan:

MDEQ Drinking Water Analysis Laboratory, (517) 335-8184,  
[http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,4561,7-135-3307\\_4131\\_4155-10683--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,4561,7-135-3307_4131_4155-10683--,00.html)

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