

SUBJECT

BOARD RESOLUTION NO. 16-648

Pertaining to the provision of water pitchers and filters for those customers whose lead water service has been disturbed during construction.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Staff is seeking approval to purchase and distribute water pitchers and filters to customers whose lead water service has been disturbed due to construction activities. These activities may include a partial lead water service replacement or plumbing upgrades at the meter setting. The pitchers and filters are being provided as an additional measure of protection as these activities may temporarily increase the drinking water lead levels.

See attached Report and resolution.

RECOMMENDATION

Approval is recommended.

REPORT

Provision of water pitchers and filters for those customers whose lead water service has been disturbed during construction.

March 29, 2016

In the Saint Paul Regional Water Services (SPRWS) water system, a water service consists of two portions; the portion in the street right-of-way that is owned and maintained by SPRWS, and the portion in private property that is owned and maintained by the property owner. A "partial lead service replacement" is the replacement of only one of those two portions, or other work that disturbs the lead pipe in any way.

For a number of reasons, SPRWS began replacing its portion of lead water services in the late 1980s. Those included avoiding higher maintenance costs and the fact that they were undersized by current standards. When the EPA passed the Lead and Copper Rule in 1991, conformance with that rule became another reason for replacement.

Studies performed in the 1990s indicated that lead levels in tap water increased immediately after a partial lead service replacement, and those studies have since then been confirmed by additional studies and our own testing. Those higher lead levels typically lasted two to six months after the replacement. In accordance with the Lead and Copper Rule, customers that had a partial lead service replacement were given information on the potential for temporarily increased levels of lead in their water and instructions on how to lower their risk of consuming higher levels of lead. These instructions included methods to flush their system, clean their aerators, not consume hot tap water, etc.

In September of 2015, SPRWS began to develop a program to improve communication with its customers who are impacted by any activity that disturbs their lead water service and to provide them with resources to minimize their exposure to lead in their drinking water.

Currently, the EPA has been planning to revise the Lead and Copper Rule, and the situation in Flint, Michigan has only increased public scrutiny of this issue. SPRWS at this time desires to provide some additional protective measures for the customers who have partial lead service replacements. SPRWS proposes to provide pitchers with filters at no cost to such customers immediately after the replacement work is done on their water service. Our testing of these filtering pitchers shows that they effectively remove lead from the water to levels that are well below federal standards. Staff believes that this is a prudent expenditure toward the protection of public health.