June 19, 2015 Water Quality Update

In April, UAF Facilities Services issued a notice to the campus community that the campus drinking water had exceeded federal limits for total trihalomethanes, also known as TTHMs.

Today we issued a similar notice. As was the case in April, the campus water is safe to drink. If it was not, we would be required by law to tell you so. You don’t need to do anything different regarding your water. However, the Environmental Protection Agency does suggest that you check with your doctor if you are pregnant, have a compromised immune system, have an infant or are elderly.

It’s important to understand that the EPA sets TTHM limits based on a yearlong average. Because of that, it will take several low quarterly readings to bring the running average below the EPA limits.

Trihalomethanes form in drinking water when chlorine, which is used to disinfect drinking water, reacts with natural organic material. Because filtering the water to reduce the amount of organic material in our water should reduce TTHM levels, on May 31 our activated carbon filtration system located at the UAF water treatment plant came online filtering natural organic material from all UAF drinking water. Reduction in TTHM levels will show up in the next quarter’s test results due out in September.

Until then, it is still safe to continue using campus water for bathing, drinking and cooking. Please visit this link for answers to frequently asked questions about this issue and trihalomethanes: http://bit.ly/uaafacilities. If you have additional questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Facilities Services at 474-7000.

(UAF Cornerstone article: http://news.uaf.edu/waterupdate_june2015/)

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER

Total Trihalomethanes (TTHM) MCL Exceeded at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF)

Our water system recently exceeded a drinking water standard. Although this incident was not an emergency, as our customers, you have a right to know what happened and what we are doing to correct this situation.

We routinely monitor for the presence of drinking water contaminants. Testing results show that our system exceeded the Locational Running Annual Average (LRAA) standard (Stage 2 Disinfectants and Disinfection Byproducts Rule) maximum contaminant level (MCL) for TTHM in the 2nd quarter of 2015. The LRAA is determined by averaging the sample analytical results for samples taken, according to a compliance monitoring plan, at a particular monitoring location during the previous four calendar quarters. The standard/MCL for TTHM is 0.080 mg/L. The level of TTHM at the Museum sampling location in the 2nd quarter of 2015 averaged 0.115 mg/L.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

-- There is nothing you need to do. You do not need to boil your water or take other corrective actions. If a situation arises where the water is no longer safe to drink, you will be notified within 24 hours.
-- If you have a severely compromised immune system, have an infant, are pregnant, or are elderly, you may be at increased risk and should seek advice from your health care providers about drinking this water.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

This is not an emergency. If it had been an emergency, you would have been notified within 24 hours.

TTHM are four volatile organic chemicals which form when disinfectants react with natural organic matter in the water.

People who drink water containing trihalomethanes in excess of the MCL over many years may experience problems with their liver, kidneys, or central nervous system, and may have an increased risk of getting cancer.

WHAT IS BEING DONE?

Because the chlorination by-product TTHM forms from a reaction between chlorine (needed for disinfecting drinking water) and natural organic matter in the water, UAF has installed activated carbon filters to reduce the organic matter in our drinking water, and to reduce the level of TTHM. The filters were placed on-line May 31, 2015. We are continuing to review other options for further removal of the natural organic matter and reduction of the TTHM in your drinking water. UAF will continue to sample according to our compliance monitoring plan for TTHMs. UAF is also required to conduct an operation evaluation by August 19, 2015, to determine if additional methods to reduce TTHM formation can be implemented. When completed, this report will be available upon request.

For more information about the TTHM exceedance, including links to resources discussing TTHM, please visit the UAF Facilities Services website at www.uaf.edu/fs/ or contact Associate Vice Chancellor Scott Bell at 474-7000.

*** Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

This notice is being sent to you by the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Public Water System ID#: 310683

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