

March 6, 2017 Water Quality Update

In April 2015, UAF Facilities Services issued the first 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, based on water samples tested on January 26, 2016. For most of us the campus water is safe to drink. However, if you are pregnant, have a compromised immune system, have an infant or are elderly the Environmental Protection Agency suggests that you check with your doctor about drinking water from a different source. Point-of-use activated carbon filters, and the water bottle filling stations on campus, will remove 90% of TTHM from drinking water, making it compliant with EPA regulations.

To address the problem of TTHMs in UAF water, on April 8, 2016 UAF turned off its drinking water treatment plant and turned on the water connection to College Utilities Corporation (CUC). The CUC source water is much lower in organic carbon than the UAF source water and the level of TTHM in CUC water is below the allowable limits. Because the UAF water system includes a 1.5 million gallon water storage tank, chlorinated CUC water is essentially held for five days in the UAF water storage tank before distribution which allows creation of TTHMs within the tank. The averaged TTHM level will drop significantly when the second, larger, CUC water connection is completed in March 2017 and the tank is bypassed. A copy of the most recent CUC Consumer Confidence Report is available on the CUC website (www.akwater.com/water_quality.shtml)

Even though the CUC water supply meets all EPA guidelines, users may still receive several more notices that campus water has exceeded limits, because those notices are based on the average of four water samples taken over a year it will take some time for the average to drop below the EPA limits. UAF will continue to test the campus drinking water each quarter.

Please visit this link for answers to frequently asked questions about this issue: (www.uaf.edu/fs/)

If you have additional questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Facilities Services at 474-7000.

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 4th quarter of 2016. 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 4th quarter of 2016 averaged 0.101 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?

On April 8, 2016 UAF's treated drinking water (TDW) source became College Utilities Corporation (CUC) TDW. To reduce TTHM levels in our distribution system, UAF is taking additional actions: 1) Lowering the amount of disinfectant added to the distribution system after it is received from CUC while monitoring to ensure we meet the EPA's disinfectant residual requirements; and 2) In March 2017, UAF will be bypassing the water storage tank to reduce residence time of the disinfectant product. This action should reduce the formation of TTHM. The connection was delayed from the January timeline mentioned in the prior notice due to a delay in receiving parts that were integral to the operation of the system.

An operation evaluation report for our distribution system is available upon request. For more information about the TTHM exceedance, including links to resources discussing TTHM, please visit the UAF Facilities Services website (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

Date posted/distributed: 03/06/2017

FAQs (updated March 6, 2017)

Is campus water safe to drink?

As mentioned in the EPA-approved notice sent to the campus, the water is safe to drink. The EPA does recommend that people with a severely compromised immune system, who have an infant, are pregnant, or are elderly, seek advice from a health care provider about drinking the water.

What are the health effects from consuming these levels of TTHM?

Health effects from the low level of TTHMs in the UAF water system would only come from very long-term consumption of the water. As stated in the EPA-approved notice sent to the campus, "People who drink water containing trihalomethanes in excess of the MCL (the recommended maximum limit) over many years may experience problems with their liver, kidneys, or central nervous system, and may have an increased risk of getting cancer."

Is campus water safe to shower in?

Yes, the water is generally safe for bathing and showering, however the health effects from absorption and inhalation are similar to those from drinking water with TTHM. If you have a severely compromised immune system, an infant, are pregnant, or are elderly, seek advice from a health care provider about bathing or showering in the water.

Is this why campus water tastes bad?

No, the TTHMs do not contribute to the taste of UAF water.

What are the EPA limits on TTHMs in the water and what were UAF levels? The EPA limit for TTHM is 80 parts per billion. The latest test results (January 25, 2017) for TTHM is 90.8 parts per billion. This results in a four-quarter average of 101 ppb.

How long have the levels been high?

In July of 2014, we tested the water and TTHM levels were higher than expected, but the one-year average remained below the EPA limit. Levels of TTHM dropped down in October 2014 and then up again in the first quarter of 2015, which caused our one-year average to exceed the EPA limit.

When will the water be clean again?

As stated in the notice to campus, the campus water is still safe to drink. However, to correct the problem with high TTHM and HAA5 concentrations UAF contracted with College Utilities Corporation to provide campus drinking water. Although on April 8, 2016 UAF converted to CUC water because of the 1.5 million gallon water tank in the UAF system it will take several months for the campus water to be compliant with EPA regulations for TTHM levels. Also, until the TTHM levels averaged over four water samples in a year are below 80 parts per billion UAF will still be out of compliance with EPA regulations. UAF will continue to test water for TTHM on a quarterly basis and will report results to the campus community if there is a violation. By the time of the July 2016 water tests, HAA5 concentrations had dropped to below the 60 parts per billion regulatory maximum.

Why did you increase the amount of chlorine in the water?

In December 2014 one of the routine tests of the campus water system showed bacteria levels higher than desired. UAF corrected the problem by immediately increasing the system-wide chlorine level from 20 to 25 parts per billion. Since connecting to the chlorinated CUC water system the amount of chlorine added by UAF has dropped to 10% of the amount added when UAF provided 100% of the treatment of the campus water. UAF will continue to slowly reduce chlorination levels in the water distributed to campus.

Will the university provide alternate drinking water for me?

While the water is safe for drinking now, for those who prefer it, filtered drinking water is available on campus at many locations. Please see the list of available sites at <http://www.uaf.edu/fs/departments/utilities/water-plant/>.