



335 Galena Street • Prairie du Sac, WI 53578 • 608-643-2421 Fax 608-643-7927

October 13, 2014

Dear Village of Prairie du Sac Water Customer:

The Village expresses its apologies for the sudden inconvenience and health concerns posed by the recent issue with your public water system. As a public water system owned by the citizens, the Village takes the health of its residents and customers seriously.

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) requires public water systems to test water supplies for bacteriological agents. The frequency and extent of testing for the Village of Prairie du Sac water utility is four samples a month. The samples are taken from various locations throughout its water distribution system. The samples are taken to a laboratory certified by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) to perform coliform bacteria analysis of drinking water samples.

On October 6, two samples were taken as part of the normal testing procedure. The samples are taken to the certified laboratory. The results of the testing became available to the Village on October 8. One of the two samples tested positive for coliform bacteria. Coliform bacteria include a large group of many types of bacteria that occur throughout the environment. Drinking water that is contaminated with coliform bacteria does not always cause illness. Most of these bacteria are harmless to humans. The presence of coliform bacteria in water does not guarantee that drinking water will cause an illness. Rather, their presence indicates that a contamination pathway exists between a source of bacteria and the water supply. Because disease causing bacteria may use this pathway to enter the water supply, a test with a positive coliform bacteria result indicates the need for follow-up testing, intense disinfection of the distribution system and inspection of the distribution system as required by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

On October 8, the same day the Village received the test results for the samples taken on October 6; six additional samples were taken and submitted to the certified lab. The Village had already been chlorinating the distribution system since October 3 in preparation for the Village to flush fire hydrants and exercise water valves during its normal maintenance of the distribution system.

On October 10, the Village was notified that one of the six samples taken on October 8 tested positive for *Escherichia coli* or *E. coli*, a fecal coliform. In a statement from the Sauk County Health Department, "Fecal coliform bacteria presence indicates that the water may be contaminated with bacteria from warm blooded animals. This may or may not cause illness. Symptoms to watch for would be diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, vomiting, fever, or other symptoms. If you experience any of these symptoms and they persist, please take extra care with personal hygiene and contact your personal health care provider."

The Village immediately contacted the DNR, which in turn issued a boil water notice. The order was written by the DNR and the Village was required to use the exact wording. Due to the wording used by the DNR, we recognize many customers got the impression the Village knew of the test results as early as October 6. The actual timeline of testing and results was explained above.

The DNR required the Village to notify its water customers within twenty-four hours of its receiving the DNR order. Within about an hour of receiving the order from the DNR, the Village contacted the media, schools, medical facilities, grocery stores, food processors and sent out an alert via the Nixle alert system. In the past, the Village has encouraged customers and residents to sign-up for Nixle alerts that are sent by either text message or e-mail. If you have access to e-mail and/or text messaging, and have not done so yet, please consider signing up to receive timely public safety alerts by visiting www.prairiedusac.net. If your e-mail or mobile phone number has changed since signing up, please visit www.nixle.com to update your contact information.

The Village mailed out copies of the DNR order to the mailing address of customers and e-mailed it to customers who have provided their e-mail to be attached to their e-mail account. If you would like your e-mail address connected to your utility account, please send your e-mail address to pdsutilities@wppienergy.org. The Village communicated with the Sauk County Health Department who in return put out a press release which was also posted on the Village's website. While the Village recognizes that it did not communicate the events that led to the boil order, it was felt that the most important thing to get out to the public on October 10 was the boil order itself so that proper health precautions could be taken by the public.

The boil water order was to remain in place until eight water samples came back negative for coliform bacteria. Four samples were taken on October 11 and four more were taken on October 12. As of October 13, all four samples tested negative for the presence of coliform bacteria. Therefore, the boil order has been lifted.

Ultraviolet (UV) light was chosen by the Village as the main feature for disinfecting well. This process works on a physical level by irradiating microorganisms with UV light, impacting their DNA structure so they cannot reproduce and eliminating its pathogenic effect. In addition, UV light does not create any disinfection byproducts and it's odorless and tasteless. Fluoride is also added prior to discharging to the water distribution system for dental hygiene. Chlorine is available to be added in emergencies in case of distribution system contamination and during system maintenance (i.e. flush hydrants and connecting new water mains). Chlorine is a chemical that can affect the taste and odor of the water. While the UV is affective at the source of the water, the well, it does not provide disinfection within the actual distribution system itself. During construction projects that install new water main, the Village requires two separate good test results before the new water main can be connected to the existing system. The Village also chlorinates the entire distribution system prior to the connection occurring. As stated, we were already chlorinating the system due to hydrate flushing when the sample that tested positive for E. coli was taken on October 8.

While the Village continues to survey its system for how the bacteria may have entered the system, the use of chlorine to disinfect the distribution system will continue until such time as the Village concludes its review of both this incident and its policy of not using chlorine as a daily disinfectant. The Village will be reaching out to the Sauk County Health Department and the DNR for assistance in determining the possible source.

The Village appreciates and welcomes your involvement as we move forward. The Village also apologizes for the inconvenience and health concerns this matter has caused. Sincerely,

Village of Prairie du Sac



Alan R. Wildman, II
Village Administrator