

PROTECTING SAFE DRINKING WATER: KEEPING OUR CUSTOMERS INFORMED



The number one focus of the city's drinking water staff is to protect public health; and we take this responsibility very seriously.

First, we want our customers to be assured Ann Arbor's drinking water remains safe to drink and no action on their part is necessary. We also want you to know that we remain dedicated to monitoring for emerging contaminants, such as 1,4-dioxane, to help stay ahead of any potential threats to the safety of the drinking water. In February 2019, we detected 1,4-dioxane in our drinking water. Even though the amount of 1,4-dioxane hasn't even come close to any Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) risk levels, we strongly believe it's important to let our customers know of this first time detection. And that's the purpose of the following information.

Each month, our water quality team sends out water samples to an independent lab to test for 1,4-dioxane. One of the recent lab tests, sampled on Feb. 6, indicated an almost undetectable amount of the 1,4-dioxane in the city's surface water supply (Huron River) and in the finished drinking water. The results estimated concentrations of 0.061 parts per billion (ppb) of 1,4-dioxane at the city's intake in Barton Pond and 0.030 ppb in the finished drinking water. That's the equivalent of approximately one drop of water in an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

With recent advances in lab testing techniques, we are able to detect very low levels of contaminants in water samples. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk. The virtually undetectable levels in Ann Arbor's drinking water were lower than the lab quantification limit and we are committed to investigating the cause. So, again in March, we will test for 1,4-dioxane, this time using two different independent water-quality labs to see if any 1,4-dioxane is detectable.

The number one focus of the city's drinking water staff is to protect public health; and we take this responsibility very seriously. The city will be actively monitoring this situation and will update customers as new information becomes available. Analytical testing results will be promptly posted on the city's website at www.A2gov.org/A2H2O once they are received from the lab.

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Frequently Asked Questions

How did 1,4-dioxane enter our waterways? Gelman Sciences (now Pall Corp., a division of Danaher Corp.) polluted groundwater in parts of Washtenaw County, including parts of the city as well as Ann Arbor and Scio Townships, when it improperly disposed of industrial solvents containing 1,4-dioxane between 1966 and 1986. That pollution has since spread through the aquifer. The city is engaged with neighboring communities and the state to, among other things, push Gelman to delineate, contain and clean up its pollution. To that end, the city has, for example, intervened in litigation in Washtenaw County Circuit Court brought by the state against Gelman.

How often does the city test the raw and finished water for the emerging contaminant known as 1,4-dioxane? The city sends water samples to an independent lab monthly to test for the contaminant. In March, we will be sending water samples to two independent labs.

What is the source of the 1,4-dioxane detected in the Huron River? We are working with other governmental entities and stakeholders to confirm any sources and prevent it from entering the local waterways.

Can the City's water treatment plant remove 1,4-dioxane? The city's water treatment plant can remove some 1,4-dioxane. Pilot testing in 2006 indicated it could remove up to 70 percent of the contaminant.

What action is the City taking to address the recent detection of 1,4-dioxane in the Huron River and drinking water? The city will continue to sample monthly and monitor the source water and drinking water. As part of future capital improvements to the water treatment plant, additional treatment for 1,4-dioxane will be considered and incorporated if necessary.

If the level of 1,4-dioxane indicated is not a health concern, will you inform the residents should the levels go higher? Yes, which is why we issued this update and are dedicated to keeping our customers informed about the safety of their drinking water. We will continue to monitor 1,4-dioxane, and our customers can review any test results on our website at www.a2gov.org/A2H2O.

What are the health criteria for 1,4-dioxane in drinking water? Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) risk assessments indicate that the drinking water concentration above which represents a 1 in 1,000,000 risk of cancer based on a lifetime of consumption, is 0.35 parts per billion. Current detectable levels in the city's drinking water is not considered to be a health risk.

Is 1,4-dioxane regulated in drinking water? Currently the contaminant is not regulated in drinking water at the federal level or in Michigan. Several states have implemented regulations for this chemical at levels between 0.3 parts per billion and 77 parts per billion. The city's drinking water levels remain 10 times lower than the most stringent regulation that exists in the United States.

What are the health risks associated with exposure to 1,4-dioxane? According to the EPA, 1,4-dioxane is a likely carcinogen. For more information about contaminants and potential health effects, you can call the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1.800.426.4791 or can download this EPA fact sheet:

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-03/documents/ffrro_factsheet_contaminant_14-dioxane_january2014_final.pdf