

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



August 18, 2004

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

To:

From: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the D.C. Department of Health (DOH), the Washington Aqueduct, and the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority (WASA)

This information packet is designed to inform you of upcoming treatment changes in the drinking water supply of the District of Columbia. The EPA, DOH, Washington Aqueduct, and WASA have formed a collaborative group called the Technical Expert Working Group to address quickly the elevated lead levels in tap water in the District. The Working Group members are collaborating to ensure that D.C. residents are aware of the steps under way to lower lead levels and ensure safe and clean drinking water. We are sending you this information because of your position as a community leader. We will continue to communicate with you and other residents to ensure that the public is aware of the treatment process and its progress.

On August 23, 2004, the Washington Aqueduct will begin adding very small amounts of phosphoric acid to the water supply to form orthophosphate in the distribution system. Many drinking water utilities nation-wide use orthophosphate to control corrosion. It works by forming a protective lining inside pipes and plumbing fixtures to prevent metals such as lead from leaching into the drinking water. Phosphoric acid is commonly added to food and soft drinks. It is generally recognized as safe by the Food and Drug Administration, and is certified for use in drinking water treatment by NSF International.

Orthophosphate alone will not affect how the water in the District tastes, looks, or smells. However, it may initially disturb loose iron deposits in the pipes, which can discolor the water and turn it a brownish red. If "red water" occurs, we expect that it will clear up quickly. WASA will respond to red water complaints by flushing water mains. District residents and businesses should plan to take some simple steps if they see "red water" during the treatment period. In this package, we have included a tip sheet that outlines how to respond to red water, as well as fact sheets about lead leaching and associated health effects.

There will be two public meetings to provide further information to the D.C. community. Each meeting will begin with an open house where Working Group members will answer questions. The first meeting will be held on Thursday, August 19 at the Congress Heights United Methodist Church, 421 Alabama Ave, SE, in the basement. The second meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 24 at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, 901 G Street, NW, in meeting room A-5. At both events, the open house will be from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m., and the public meeting will be from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.

If you have any questions about this treatment process, please call (800) 426-4791, or send an email to leadoutreach@cadmusgroup.com. Your feedback is welcome and encouraged as we work to

communicate with the residents of the District of Columbia on our progress towards decreasing lead in the drinking water.