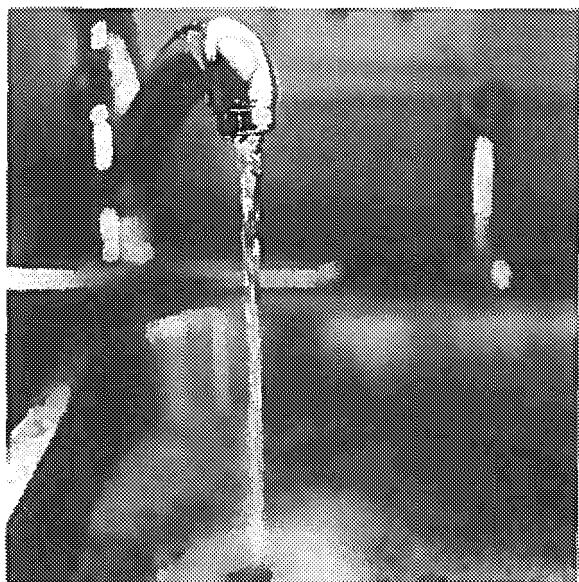


Lead in Pittsburgh water samples down but still exceed EPA threshold

HERESA CLIFT 🐦 (<https://twitter.com/TClift>) | Thursday, Jan. 19, 2017, 11:42 a.m.



Getty Images/Fuse

Lead levels in Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Authority water samples decreased from six months ago but still exceed a key U.S. Environmental Protection Agency threshold, the authority reported Thursday.

Thirty of the water samples voluntarily collected from 149 homes in December had lead levels at or greater than 15 parts per billion, a threshold set by the EPA, said Will Pickering, PWSA spokesman.

PWSA's latest 90th percentile result, which will be reported to the EPA and included in annual water quality reports, is 18 parts per billion — down from 22 parts per billion from samples collected in May and June. The 90th percentile is not an average of all samples

but a calculation to determine whether 10 percent of the sites exceed the action level of 15 ppb.

All samples were taken from homes that have, or are expected to have, lead service lines or plumbing, according to a PWSA news release. Samples were sent to an independent lab for analysis, then reviewed by the state's Department of Environmental Protection.

Lead service lines, which run from water mains to homes, are the primary source of the issue, the release said. The lines are owned by PWSA in public spaces and by homeowners in private spaces.

PWSA has been identifying and removing lead lines in public spaces, conducting studies to determine why lead levels have risen and identifying water treatment chemicals or modifications to the treatment plant that could reduce corrosion from lead pipes, the release said.

PWSA also is working with the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh to identify sources of financial assistance for homeowners to replace lead service lines, the release said.

PWSA cannot attribute the decrease in lead to a particular initiative at this point, Pickering said. Efforts by PWSA and customers to remove lead service lines or plumbing would not be reflected in these results.

Under an EPA mandate, PWSA will continue compliance testing every six months until the 90th percentile result is under 15 ppb for two consecutive rounds of testing.

Theresa Clift is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach her at 412-380-5669 or tclift@tribweb.com (<mailto:tclift@tribweb.com>).

Breaking down the results

How the samples tested by PWSA rated (a total of 159 samples were collected from 149 homes; ppb represents parts per billion):

- 51 are non-detect for lead
- 25 are between 2.1 and 4.7 ppb
- 28 are between 5 and 9.8 ppb
- 25 are between 10 and 14 ppb
- 16 are between 15 and 19 ppb
- 12 are between 20 and 46 ppb
- 2 are between 50 and 160 ppb (The sample that detected a 160 ppb level was taken from a sink that had not been used for several years.)

For more information, visit PWSA's [lead facts page](http://www.pgh2o.com/lead-facts) (<http://www.pgh2o.com/lead-facts>).

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Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority tests find lead again

January 20, 2017 12:00 AM

By Don Hopey / Pittsburgh post-Gazette

New test results show high lead drinking water levels continue to be a problem for some residential customers of the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, a finding that reinforces the authority's mandate to step up replacement of lead service lines.

According to the PWSA, tap water tests done at 149 city residences with known lead service lines in December calculated lead at 18 parts per billion — above the state and federal 15 parts per billion action level. The calculation means that 10 percent of the tap water sampled had lead levels that high or higher.

PWSA tests done in June 2016 found lead at 22 parts per billion.

"Given that we're still in the studying process and haven't made significant changes in the system, and are sampling homes with lead service lines, we weren't surprised by the new test results," said Will Pickering, a PWSA spokesman.

PWSA's treated water contains no detectable lead, but can pick up lead through corrosion in lead service lines — the pipes that carry water from mains under the street into residences, and from lead soldered pipe joints and interior lead plumbing. It's a concern because exposure to lead causes serious health problems, especially for young children and pregnant women.

PWSA estimates that 25 percent of its 80,000 customers get their water through lead service lines, but doesn't know where many of those lines are located.

It has just started the "multi-year process" of reviewing and digitizing old water line records to identify the lead lines, Mr. Pickering said. As it identifies those lines it will make the information available to the public.

Because its tests show lead above the 15 parts per billion action level, the authority must conduct stepped-up testing, and is required to replace at least 7 percent — that's 1,400 — of its lead service lines a year.

Mr. Pickering said PWSA has replaced 240 lead service lines since June, but he expects that number to increase substantially with the hiring of a new contractor to help with lead line replacement. The authority will try to coordinate replacement of the service lines it owns with linked service lines owned by the property owner.

A breakdown of the December test results show lead was undetectable in 51 of the 149 homes tested, 53 more had lead levels below 10 parts per billion, and 25 more had lead below 15 parts per billion.

Thirty had lead levels above 15 parts per billion, the highest at 160 parts per billion from an attic wash basin that hadn't been used for at least two years in a home in the 15217 ZIP code. A retest found much lower lead contamination, Mr. Pickering said.

The public interest and PWSA's focus on lead comes after severe lead contamination of the water in Flint, Mich., and a DEP order that criticized the authority's unapproved change of lead corrosion inhibitors in 2014.

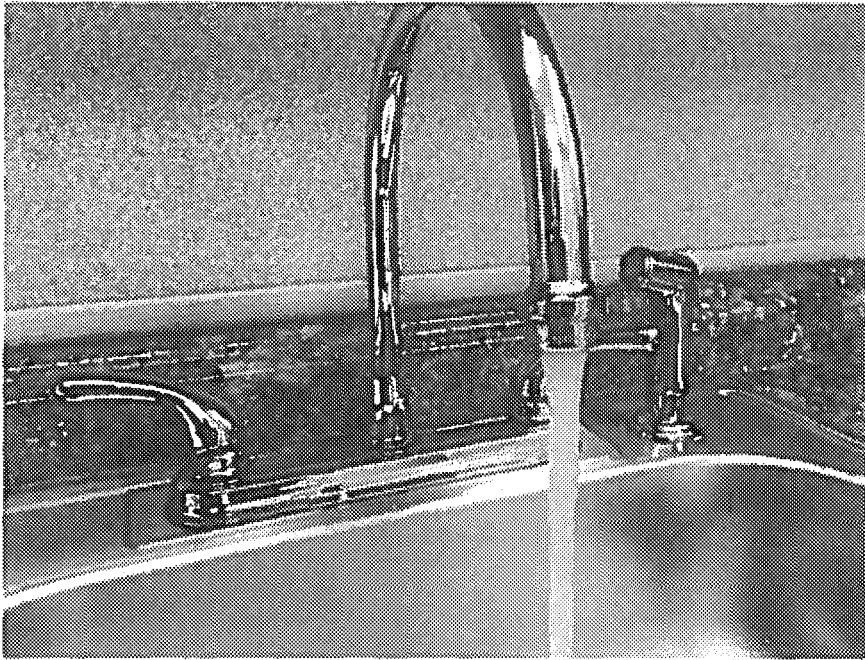
The DEP order requires the authority to complete two rounds of lead and copper tap water monitoring this year at residences with lead water supply lines. The next round of tests will be done in June, Mr. Pickering said.

He said the water authority has recently started conducting studies to determine why water lead levels have risen and identify changes in water treatment chemical use that can reduce corrosion from lead pipes.

Don Hopey: dhohey@post-gazette.com, 412-263-1983, or on Twitter @donhohey.

PWSA issues boil water advisory for 100,000 customers

THERESA CLIFT [@ \(https://twitter.com/TCliff\)](#) | Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2017, 7:12 p.m.



Tribune-Review

Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority has issued a flush and boil water advisory for about 100,000 of its customers in the central and eastern Pittsburgh area. The temporary advisory was issued Tuesday afternoon to 100,000 customers after tests taken near the Highland Park drinking water filtration plant failed to meet state standards for treated drinking water, according to an order from the state's Department of Environmental Protection to PWSA.

The DEP stated that tests it received Monday show the water agency was in violation of the state's Safe Drinking Water Act.

The advisory is due to concerns that the water could be contaminated with giardia, a microscopic parasite that causes a diarrheal illness and is spread from infected humans or animals, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"PWSA failed to achieve a combined total effect of disinfection processes utilized in a filtration plant to achieve at least 90 percent inactivation of giardia viruses," the DEP order stated.

Chlorine is added to the water to prevent giardia contamination and other disinfection purposes, said PWSA spokesman Will Pickering, but not enough chlorine was taken by PWSA or its regulators.

"The advisory is purely precautionary, and we are not aware of any cases of giardia," Pickering said. "The Highland microfiltration plant was not designed to handle this type of concern."

PWSA is ordered to sample chlorine levels at five locations at the Highland Park Reservoir and the Highland Pump Station every four hours until the advisory is lifted.

The advisory applies to residents in the following neighborhoods: Bedford Dwelling, Bloomfield, Bluff, Crawford, East Liberty, Friendship, Glenview, Larimer, Lawrenceville, Lincoln-Lemington, Morningside, Oakland, Point Breeze, Polish Hill, Regent Square, Shadyside, Stanton Heights, Squirrel Hill, and Westwood.

Customers in the affected area should run water for at least one minute, then boil water for one minute and let it cool down before using it for drinking, cooking, or eating food, the PWSA release said.

PITTSBURGH SETS UP WATER DISTRIBUTION SITES

Wednesday morning the city announced sites where residents can pick up water. Eleven Pittsburgh Public Safety facilities will serve as water gallon water buffalo tanks.

Pittsburgh Engine Co. No. 7, 4603 Stanton Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15201

Fire Station 6, 3958 Penn Ave. Pittsburgh, Pa. 15224

Fire Station 8, 149 N. Euclid Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15206

Fire Station 10, 2501 Allequippa St. Pittsburgh, Pa. 15213

Fire Station 12, 4156 Winterburn Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15207

Fire Station 14, 259 McKee Place Pittsburgh, Pa. 15213

Fire Station 15, 7024 Lemington Ave. Pittsburgh, Pa. 15206

Fire Station 17, 7601 Hamilton Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15208

Fire Station 18, 5858 Northumberland St., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15217

Fire Station 19, 159 Homestead St., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15218

Fire Training Academy, 1402 Washington Blvd., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15206

ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS (OPERATIONAL BY 2 P.M.)

Shop 'n Save, 1850 Centre Ave., Pittsburgh PA 15219 (Hill District)

Giant Eagle, 6320 Shakespeare St. Pittsburgh PA 15206 (Shadyside)

Morewood Gardens Apartments Parking Lot Corner of Forbes Ave. & Morewood St. Pittsburgh PA 15213 (Oakland)

Fire Station 13, Hazelwood - 200 Flowers Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15207

22 SCHOOLS AND 2 CHILDHOOD CENTERS CLOSED

Due to the flush and boil water advisory issued by the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, 22 Pittsburgh schools and two early childhood

Schools closed due to water advisory

Pittsburgh Alderdice

Pittsburgh Arsenal PreK-5

Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8

Pittsburgh Dilworth

Pittsburgh Faison

Pittsburgh Fulton

Pittsburgh Liberty

Pittsburgh Lincoln

Pittsburgh Linden

Pittsburgh Greenfield

Pittsburgh Miller

Pittsburgh Minadeo

Pittsburgh Millions

Pittsburgh Montessori

Pittsburgh Obama

Pittsburgh Peabody/Obama Early Childhood Center

Pittsburgh Science and Technology

Pittsburgh Frick Early Childhood Center

Pittsburgh Sterrett

Pittsburgh Sunnyside

Pittsburgh Westinghouse

Pittsburgh Weil

Pittsburgh Woolslair

In addition to the 24 school closures, the City Connections East program is also closed.

UPMC, ALLEGHENY HEALTH NETWORK STATEMENTS ON PWSA ADVISORY

On Wednesday morning UPMC released a statement on the PWSA advisory:

"UPMC is following the PWSA boiled water notice at the hospitals in the affected neighborhoods. As part of our contingency plan for this type are being distributed to patients and staff. All UPMC hospitals remain operational and there is no impact on patient care. There are no cancellations that are scheduled for Wednesday."

The Allegheny Health Network released a statement on the advisory:

"After the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA) issued a water safety alert last night for a number of Pittsburgh communities - including taking several precautionary measures to protect patients, staff and visitors, including moving to bottled water for consumption, teeth brushing measures in place until we are instructed otherwise by the PWSA."

PENGUINS, AEG REACT TO PWSA WATER NOTICE

The Pittsburgh Penguins, AEG and Aramark have responded to Tuesday's water advisory issued by the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority the Penguins game at PPG Paints Arena.

That includes all water fountains, soda fountains and ice machines. Bottled water and soda remain available.

The PWSA issued a precautionary flush and boil water advisory "for some customers in the central and eastern sections of the city." The goal is to ensure that all drinking water meets regulatory standards. The health and safety of our drinking water is PWSA's number one priority."

More information on the advisory can be found at www.pgh2o.com (<http://www.pgh2o.com>).

RELATED CONTENT

List of Pittsburgh schools closed due to water advisory

Due to a flush and boil water advisory issued by the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority for areas of the city, the following 22 Pittsburgh ...

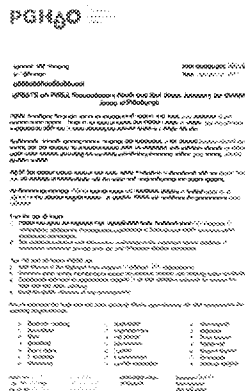
(<http://triblive.com/local/allegheeny/11876316-74/pittsburgh-childhood-closed>)

Pittsburgh water crisis raises possibility of contracting parasite that can lead to intestinal problems

When it comes to the giardia parasite, a little can go a long way. Giardia is a microscopic parasite that causes cramps and diarrhea and is ...

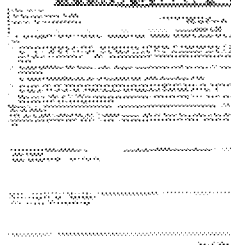
(<http://triblive.com/news/healthnow/11877832-74/giardia-parasite-symptoms>)

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Contact: Will Pickering
412.657.4031
communications@pgh2o.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: January 31, 2017

UPDATE on PWSA Precautionary Flush and Boil Water Advisory for Certain Areas of Pittsburgh

PWSA is notifying the public out of an abundance of caution, and there is no evidence of any bacteria in the system. There is no direct evidence that PWSA's water is unsafe, but the advisory is required by DEP due to tests showing low chlorine levels at a single test site.

Restaurants, schools, nursing homes, hospitals and businesses in the affected territory should also comply with the advisory, by providing bottled water as necessary, and operators should not utilize public water sources (including ice machines and drinking fountains) without prior boiling until the advisory is lifted.

PWSA has notified critical medical and public safety institutions in accordance with our Action Plan, and will continue to communicate with the public and local institutions with status updates.

On Wednesday morning, PWSA and city crews will coordinate delivery of bottled water to all schools in the affected neighborhoods. In addition, PWSA will coordinate the placement of water buffaloes.

Over the last 12 hours:

1. PWSA has taken the Highland Park microfiltration water treatment plant out of service to immediately address the Pennsylvania Department of Environment (DEP) concerns about inadequate chlorination.
2. The Authority installed new chlorination technology at the treatment plant in addition to automated sensors to provide accurate and consistent chlorine monitoring.

Over the next 24 hours, PWSA will:

1. Add chlorine in the Highland Park reservoir to address DEP requirements.
2. Continue water quality monitoring to assure we continue to meet safe drinking water standards.
3. Collaborate with DEP to aggressively respond to all DEP technical inquiries, to remove the flush and boil water advisory.
4. Keep the public informed of any developments.

PWSA estimates the flush and boil water advisory affects approximately 100,000 customers in the following neighborhoods:

- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| • Bedford Dwelling | • Greenfield | • Morningside |
| • Bloomfield | • Highland Park | • Oakland |
| • Bluff | • Hill District | • Point Breeze |
| • Crawford | • Homewood | • Polish Hill |
| • East Liberty | • Larimer | • Regent Square |
| • Friendship | • Lawrenceville | • Shadyside |
| • Glenwood | • Lincoln-Lemington | • Stanton Heights |

Penn Liberty Plaza I
1200 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh PA 15222

info@pgh2o.com
T 412.255.2423
F 412.255.2475

www.pgh2o.com
@pgh2o

Customer Service /
Emergencies:
412.255.2423





- Squirrel Hill
- Terrace Village
- Garfield
- Swisshelm Park
- Hazelwood

Customers within the impacted area should do the following before using water for drinking, making ice, washing dishes, brushing teeth, and food preparation until further notice:

1. Flush your water tap by running water for 1 minute or longer, then
2. Boil water for 1 minute, and let it cool before consumption

Flushing water brings in fresh water from the main and boiling fresh water kills any bacteria and other organisms that can enter the water. You can also use bottled water.

Customers in this service area are being advised to flush their taps and then boil their fresh water out of an abundance of caution to ensure that drinking water meets or exceeds all state and federal water quality requirements. Impacted customers have been notified by PWSA via automated robocalls. Customers can identify if they are in the impacted area by searching on this interactive map: <http://bit.ly/2jSreY6>. The boil water advisory will remain in place until further notice. Customers with questions can call PWSA at 412-255-2423 or visit pgh2o.com.



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
BUREAU OF WATER STANDARDS AND FACILITY REGULATION

FIELD ORDER

(PLEASE PRINT AND PRESS FIRMLY)

SYSTEM NAME Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority	PWS ID No. 6020038	CASE NUMBER 17-51-538334-03
LOCATION 900 Freeport Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15222	MUNICIPALITY City of Pittsburgh	COUNTY Allegheny
PERSON TO WHOM ORDER IS DIRECTED Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority		TELEPHONE NUMBER (412) 782-7553
MAILING ADDRESS 1200 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15222		
NAME AND TITLE OF PERSON SERVED		DATE ORDER SERVED January 31, 2017
<p>The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Department of Environmental Protection ("Department"), has made the following Findings of Fact:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Department is the agency with authority to administer and enforce the Pennsylvania Safe Drinking Water Act, the Act of May 1, 1984, P.L. 206, No. 43, 35 P.S. §§721.1-721.19 ("SDWA"), and Section 1917-A of the Administrative Code, the Act of April 9, 1929, P.L. 177, as amended, 71 P.S. §510-17, and the regulations of the Environmental Quality Board adopted pursuant thereto. 2. The person named above to whom this order is directed ("Recipient") owns and/or operates a public water system at the location identified above. 3. The Department has received operational data from the public water system identified above on January 30, 2017. 4. The operation of this water system with the violation(s) identified in this Order is a violation of the Sections of the Department's regulations cited herein and the SDWA and constitutes a public nuisance under Section 12 of the SDWA, 35 P.S. §721.12. 5. Section 13 of the SDWA, 35 P.S. §721.13, provides that the Department may assess a civil penalty of up to Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00) per day for each violation of the SDWA. 		
<p>Description of Violation: PWSA failed to achieve a combined total effect of disinfection processes utilized in a filtration plant to achieve at least 90% inactivation of Giardia cysts and a 99.9% inactivation of viruses, as determined by CTs and measurement methods established by the EPA.</p>		
<p>Location of Violation: Highland Water Treatment Plant (Treatment Plant 308)</p>		
<p>Provisions of Regulation, Statute or Permit Violated: 25 Pa. Code Sections 109.4 and 109.202(c)(1)(ii).</p>		



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
 DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
 BUREAU OF WATER STANDARDS AND FACILITY REGULATION

FIELD ORDER (continuation)

(PLEASE PRINT AND PRESS FIRMLY)

SYSTEM NAME Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority	PWS ID No. 5020038	CASE NUMBER 17-51-538334-02
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Pursuant to Sections 5, 10 and 12 of the SDWA, 35 P.S. §§721.5, 721.10 and 721.12; and Section 1917-A of the Administrative Code of 1929, 71 P.S. §510-17, it is hereby ordered that the owner shall perform the corrective actions listed below within the designated time.

Corrective Action/Abatement Schedule Required:

1. PWSA shall, within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt of this order, issue a Tier I Boil Water Public Notice in accordance with the provisions of 25 Pa. Code 109.408 for all consumers served by the supply main from the following locations as identified on the "Highland Park Area Water Network - Overview Map" provided to the Department by PWSA on January 27, 2017:
 - a. The North Saint Clair Customer Point;
 - b. The 36-inch supply main along Washington Boulevard;
 - c. The 20-inch supply main along Highland Drive.

The Tier 1 Boil Water Public Notice shall include instructions to consumers to perform adequate flushing prior to drawing water to boil.

2. The boil water advisory may not be lifted until approved in writing by the Department.
3. Beginning immediately, PWSA shall sample free chlorine residual and calculate Giardia Log Inactivation at all 5 Customer Points identified on the "Highland Park Area Water Network - Overview Map" provided to the Department by PWSA on January 27, 2017; at the Highland Park Reservoir influent to the Highland Park Membrane Filtration Plant; and at the Highland Pump Station, every 4 hours until this requirement is modified or terminated in writing by the Department. All sampling data and calculations shall be submitted to the Department, to Renee Diehl at rediehl@pa.gov, by 9am every day (unless earlier notification to the Department is required under 25 Pa. Code Section 109.202(c)(1)(ii) or any other provision of the Safe Drinking Water regulations).
4. Based on the data obtained by PWSA under Paragraph 3, above, PWSA shall determine and provide documentation to the Department of the appropriate CT compliance location(s) which consistently and reliably indicate the lowest Giardia log inactivation among the locations described in Paragraph 3 above.

NOTICE OF APPEAL RIGHTS

Any person aggrieved by this action may appeal, pursuant to Section 4 of the Environmental Hearing Board Act, 35 P.S. Section 7514, and the Administrative Agency Law, 2 Pa. C.S. Chapter 5A, to the Environmental Hearing Board, Second Floor, Rachel Carson State Office Building, 400 Market Street, P.O. Box 8457, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8457, 717-787-3483. TDD users may contact the Board through the Pennsylvania Relay Service, 800-654-5984. Appeals must be filed with the Environmental Hearing Board within 30 days of receipt of written notice of this action unless the appropriate statute provides a different time period. Copies of the appeal form and the Board's rules of practice and procedure may be obtained from the Board. The appeal form and the Board's rules of practice and procedure are also available in Braille or on audiotape from the Secretary to the Board at 717-787-3483. This paragraph does not, in and of itself, create any right of appeal beyond that permitted by applicable statutes and decisional law.

IF YOU WANT TO CHALLENGE THIS ACTION, YOUR APPEAL MUST REACH THE BOARD WITHIN 30 DAYS. YOU DO NOT NEED A LAWYER TO FILE AN APPEAL WITH THE BOARD.

IMPORTANT LEGAL RIGHTS ARE AT STAKE, HOWEVER, SO YOU SHOULD SHOW THIS DOCUMENT TO A LAWYER AT ONCE. IF YOU CANNOT AFFORD A LAWYER, YOU MAY QUALIFY FOR FREE PRO BONO REPRESENTATION. CALL THE SECRETARY TO THE BOARD AT 717-787-3483 FOR MORE INFORMATION.

The undersigned person hereby acknowledges receipt of this order and any attachment(s) hereto. This signature does not constitute an acknowledgement that any or all of the violations listed above have occurred or continue to occur.

Department Representative (Name & Title - Please Print)

Renee Diehl, Operation Section Chief

Telephone Number: (412) 442-4210

Department Representative's Signature:

Renee Diehl

Received by:

District to Close 24 Schools for Wednesday, February 1st Due to Flush and Boil Water Advisory

PITTSBURGH January 31, 2017 – Due to a flush and boil water advisory, issued by the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority for areas of the city, the following 22 schools and two early childhood centers will be closed tomorrow, February 1, 2017.

- Pittsburgh Allderdice
- Pittsburgh Arsenal PreK-5
- Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8
- Pittsburgh Colfax
- Pittsburgh Dilworth
- Pittsburgh Faison
- Pittsburgh Fulton
- Pittsburgh Liberty
- Pittsburgh Lincoln
- Pittsburgh Linden
- Pittsburgh Greenfield
- Pittsburgh Miller
- Pittsburgh Minadeo
- Pittsburgh Millionses
- Pittsburgh Montessori
- Pittsburgh Obama
- Pittsburgh Peabody/Obama Early Childhood Center
- Pittsburgh Science and Technology
- Pittsburgh Frick Early Childhood Center
- Pittsburgh Sterrett
- Pittsburgh Sunnyside
- Pittsburgh Westinghouse
- Pittsburgh Weil
- Pittsburgh Woolslair

The closures will allow the District time to properly cover water fountains, prepare food services and provide bottled water so schools are ready to open on Thursday if the advisory is still in effect. Only administrators, custodians and food service staff are to report to the locations impacted by the closures.

###

The Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) Career and Technical Education Division (CTE) does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs or activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. Inquiries may be directed to the Title IX Coordinator or the Section 504/ADA Title II Coordinator at 341 Bellfield Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15213 or 412.529.3500

Water boil advisory continues for thousands of Pittsburgh residents

February 1, 2017 5:43 PM

By Don Hopey and Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority issued a precautionary water advisory Tuesday for about 100,000 residents in the central and eastern sections of the city, warning them to boil their water before ingesting it due to concerns about possible giardia contamination.

The order also prompted the city school district to close 22 schools and two early childhood centers for Wednesday.

READ MORE: Water distribution sites set up during boil advisory

Testing by the state Department of Environmental Protection discovered low levels of chlorine in the water at the Highland Park reservoir and distribution facility, and the department ordered the PWSA to inform its customers of the problem and issue the advisory, which affects about half of the authority's 83,000 customers.

The low level of chlorine disinfectant could allow giardia, a microscopic parasite, to live in the water supply. Ingestion of giardia can result in an intestinal infection causing cramps, nausea and diarrhea, but no such illnesses attributable to the water supply had been reported, according to the PWSA.

Neither the PWSA nor the DEP provided details about safe chlorine levels and what the levels were Tuesday.

The PWSA released a detailed map of the city neighborhoods subject to the boil-water advisory. It includes Bedford Dwellings, Bloomfield, the Bluff, Crawford, East Liberty, Friendship, Glenwood, Greenfield, Highland Park, Hill District, Homewood, Larimer, Lawrenceville, Lincoln-Lemington, Morningside, Oakland, Point Breeze, Polish Hill, Regent Square, Shadyside, Stanton Heights, Squirrel Hill, Swisshelm Park and Terrace Village.

The PWSA released a detailed map of the areas (in blue) subject to the boil water advisory:

Customers in those neighborhoods should, until further notice, run their taps for one minute then boil water for one minute and let it cool before using it for drinking, making ice, washing dishes, brushing teeth, watering pets and preparing food. Some but not all in-home water filters can remove giardia and other waterborne viruses.

The Pittsburgh Public Schools said it would close the school buildings and early childhood centers today to give the district time to cover water fountains, prepare food services and acquire bottled water. The schools should reopen Thursday. Only administrators, custodians and food service staff were to report today.

The closed schools are: Allderdice; Arsenal PreK-5; Arsenal 6-8; Colfax; Dilworth; Faison; Fulton; Liberty; Lincoln; Linden; Greenfield; Miller; Minadeo; Milliones; Pittsburgh Montessori; Obama; Science and Technology; Sterrett; Sunnyside; Westinghouse; Weil; and Woolslair. The early childhood centers are Peabody/Obama and Frick.

PWSA Director Bernard Lindstrom said at a late night news conference that he anticipates the advisory will be in effect for no more than three days. but the decision rests with the DEP. He said the water authority would stay in close contact with the DEP until the issue is resolved.

Pittsburgh public safety officials said water buffaloes and bottles of water will be distributed throughout the affected neighborhoods. PWSA and city crews will coordinate delivery of bottled water to all of the schools that fall under the advisory.

The University of Pittsburgh also issued an advisory to students, faculty and administrators Tuesday evening, telling them of the water problems and advising them to flush and boil water before use.

In a statement Tuesday, UPMC said it "is following the PWSA boiled water notice at the hospitals in the affected neighborhoods. As part of our contingency plan for this type of emergency, water supplies, including bottled water, are being distributed to patients and staff. All UPMC hospitals remain operational and there is no impact on patient care. There are no cancellations to any patient procedures, surgeries, and/or tests that are scheduled for Wednesday."

In addition, the Animal Rescue League issued a plea for people to donate jugs and cases of water to its Hamilton Avenue facility, where the league doesn't have the ability to boil enough water for the animals in its care. Water can be dropped off at 6926 Hamilton Ave.

The Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium, on the other hand, said it is unaffected by the order.

"We are doing fine here at the zoo," said Tracy Gray, a spokeswoman at the Highland Park facility. "Actually we have the capability to sanitize our water in the aquarium obviously for the different water needs of our exotic marine life, and the sanitized or clean water is also available for any of our animals that we need to provide drinking water for."

Meanwhile, across town where penguins of a different variety attract a crowd, the Pittsburgh Penguins responded to the advisory by shutting off all public water drinking sources at PPG Paints Arena during the team's game tonight against the Nashville Predators. Water fountains, soda fountains and ice machines were shut off. Bottled water and soda were still available to fans.



The Highland Park Reservoir No. 1, where low chlorine levels caused the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority to issue a precautionary boil order on Tuesday. (Rebecca Droke/Post-Gazette)

The PWSA also said restaurants, nursing homes, hospitals and businesses in the affected territory should also comply with the advisory by providing bottled water as necessary and not using ice machines or drinking fountains without prior boiling.

The PWSA released a statement shortly before 6 p.m. Tuesday that said: "The temporary advisory is the result of recent disinfection and chlorine testing taken at a single location near the Highland Park drinking water filtration plant. A few tests showed low levels of free chlorine in the treated drinking water. PWSA is coordinating with the Pennsylvania Department of Environment to ensure that all regulatory requirements for disinfection are met immediately."

The DEP's order requires PWSA to conduct water tests every four hours at eight locations around the Highland Park reservoirs, filtration and treatment plant, and pump station, until the testing shows acceptable disinfectant levels. The DEP can assess a civil penalty of up to \$5,000 a day for violations of the state's Safe Drinking Water Act.

"We want to see this (boiling requirement) end as soon as possible,' said Will Pickering, a PWSA spokesman. "We need to produce testing that meets the standards and will be doing those tests tonight and tomorrow."

Timothy McNulty, Mayor Bill Peduto's spokesman, termed the advisory a "precautionary and technical move," and said the mayor was briefed on the DEP boil water order by the PWSA director and board chairman on "their efforts to fix this technical issue."

"It's very disappointing and frustrating, but they'll work as hard as they can to comply with the state's orders," Mr. McNulty said of PWSA. "We understand the inconvenience this is going to be for many."



Mr. McNulty said that "there are no danger levels that have been discovered yet. We hope people can just be patient with PWSA." He said the authority would "try to get it resolved as soon as possible."

City Councilman Dan Gilman of Squirrel Hill, whose district includes Shadyside, North Oakland and part of Squirrel Hill, said he's been flooded with questions from constituents and doesn't blame them for being "fearful."

Lola Folana signs a jug of water with the names of her late Jack Russel Terriers, Grace and Daisy, as she drops off water Tuesday at the Animal Rescue League Shelter and Wildlife Center's Hamilton Avenue facility in Homewood. (Stephanie Strasburg/Post-Gazette)

"It certainly has created a very serious panic, and I'm not sure that the panic is needed. But that's not the fault of PWSA," he said.

"PWSA should always err on the side of providing information to the public.

"Any time there's a boil-water alert, it's obviously concerning. I've been told [by PWSA] that this is overly, abundantly cautious" and that "there's no known threat to the public."

Mr. Pickering, issued a statement saying the temporary advisory is "the result of recent disinfection and chlorine testing taken at a single location near the Highland Park drinking water filtration plant. A few tests showed low levels of free chlorine in the treated drinking water. PWSA is coordinating with the Pennsylvania Department of Environment to ensure that all regulatory requirements for disinfection are met immediately."

First Published January 31, 2017 5:20 PM

Despite boil order, no sign of contamination in Pittsburgh water

BOB BAUDER 🐦 (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2017, 6:12 p.m.



Andrew Russell | Tribune-Review

Phil Wasler, Bill Johnston and Peter Kope, all of Highland Park, collect potable water from Fire Station 8 in East Liberty, Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2017.

Pittsburgh has found no signs of contamination in its drinking water and no clear evidence of low chlorine levels cited by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection in issuing a boil water order for 100,000 city residents, officials said

Wednesday.

Trouble began Sunday when the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority recorded "erratic" chlorine readings at a filtration plant servicing the Highland Park Reservoir, which supplies water to 60 percent of the city. PWSA adds chlorine as a disinfectant to kill pathogens that might enter the system.

PWSA is testing the water every four hours, and officials from PWSA and DEP plan to meet at 8 a.m. Thursday to review the authority's latest analysis, PWSA interim Executive Director Bernard Lindstrom said Wednesday evening.

Still, officials said the boil water order may not be lifted for two more days.



Natasha Lindstrom
@NewsNatasha

Follow

PWSA to affected customers: Flush your lines for 1 minute. That will ensure you flush any particulates from lead pipes. Then boil your water

6:40 PM - 1 Feb 2017

1 2

Lindstrom said the readings could have been caused by human error, a malfunctioning chlorine tester or a mechanical problem at the reservoir.

"We believe the water treatment plant and the system is operating within the regulatory requirements," Lindstrom said. "We admit that the point where we were measuring chlorine was reading (erratically). We found that out. We engaged with DEP. They asked us if we could fix it. We gave them a plan. They said that wasn't adequate enough and said we're issuing a field order to provide a boil order."

DEP spokesman Neil Shader said the agency issued the order because of a breakdown in chlorine treatment. He said the order would be lifted after PWSA demonstrates that inadequately treated water has been flushed from the system or water in the system has been properly treated.

He said PWSA recorded chlorine levels below standard during 12-hour periods Sunday and Monday and had an obligation to notify the public within 24 hours of the breakdown.

PWSA issued the notice around 6 p.m. Tuesday.

"It wasn't until Tuesday that we were aware of the scope of the issue," Water Quality Chief Gina Cyprych said.

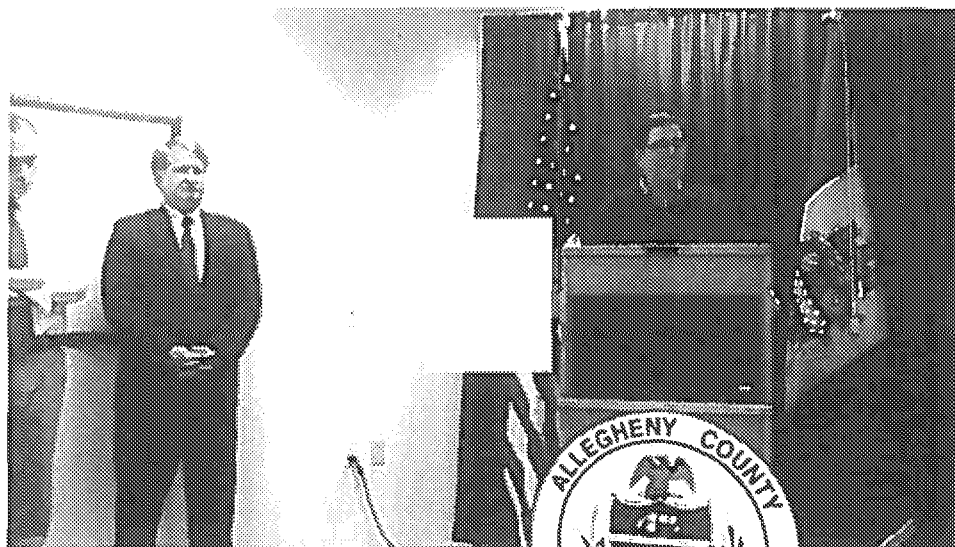
Lindstrom said the city took "abundance of caution" and assumed the issue was caused by a mechanical problem at the reservoir, and PWSA plans to replace a malfunctioning valve. The work could take as long as two days.

Meanwhile, PWSA removed the reservoir from the water system and is supplying water from its main treatment plant in Aspinwall, which meets DEP regulations, Lindstrom said.

The authority is adding chlorine to the system, increasing water production at the plant and taking seven different water tests at 34 locations across the city. Officials said Wednesday evening that chlorine levels were rising.

As part of discussions with DEP, Lindstrom said, PWSA also has to flush the "bad source water" from the system before the boil order is lifted. To achieve that, PWSA plans to open select fire hydrants across the city, Lindstrom said. He did not identify the locations.

No one has been treated at Pittsburgh hospitals for signs of consuming contaminated water, officials said.



Natasha Lindstrom
@NewsNatasha

Follow

.@billpeduto: #PittsburghWater order in effect bc of PA regs: "In any other state, we'd be drinking the water. We wouldn't be closing schls"

6:35 PM - 1 Feb 2017

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Speaking on the issue for the first time Wednesday evening, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto stressed that affected customers' water still was above the federal standard for chlorine.

"We've never gone below the federal standards," he said. "If you lived in any other state, you would be drinking the water. We wouldn't be closing down schools."

Kevin Acklin, Peduto's chief of staff, said he didn't think DEP overreacted.

"DEP has a job to do. We respect their regulatory authority over PWSA," he said.

Residents and businesses said the boil order was causing hardship.

Jimmy John's sandwich shop on Forbes Avenue in Squirrel Hill closed until further notice "due to the water crisis," according to a sign on its window.

Three storefronts away, Commonplace Coffee was open and serving espresso drinks but not drip-coffee or pour-overs.

"People are adjusting. Everyone understands," said Isabelle Carpenter, coffee bar manager, as she prepared a customer a Cafe Americano.

Darius Smalls, 24, of the Hill District lamented he hasn't showered in two days. "I'm just trying to stay away from the water."

The city and PWSA are supplying bottled water to schools and hospitals and have set up water distributions sites for residents to get water from portable tanks. Officials said residents who are unable to get water should call the city's 311 response line.

Pittsburgh Public Schools, which canceled classes at more than 20 schools Wednesday, will return to full operation on Thursday.

Bob Bauder is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach him at 412-765-2312 or bbauder@tribweb.com. Staff writer Natasha Lindstrom contributed.

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PWSA submits plan to state that could end boil-water advisory

February 1, 2017 10:22 PM

By Don Hopey and Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

“An abundance of caution” is how Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority executive director Bernard R. Lindstrom described the reasoning behind a state order that has about 100,000 city residents boiling their tap water this week.

He and other PWSA staffers used the phrase a half dozen times at a news conference at noon Wednesday to characterize the state Department of Environmental Protection’s order following what he said was one slightly low chlorine reading in the water line between the uncovered Highland Park Reservoir No. 1 and the water system’s membrane filtration plant.

Because of that reading, much of Pittsburgh has been under a boil-water advisory since Tuesday afternoon. Some city schools closed Wednesday, water buffaloes were set up in many neighborhoods, and bottled water was a scarce commodity at stores.

“The DEP was acting with an abundance of caution, and we respect their oversight,” Mr. Lindstrom said when asked whether the state agency was overreacting. “But we believe the membrane filtration plant was operating within the requirements.”

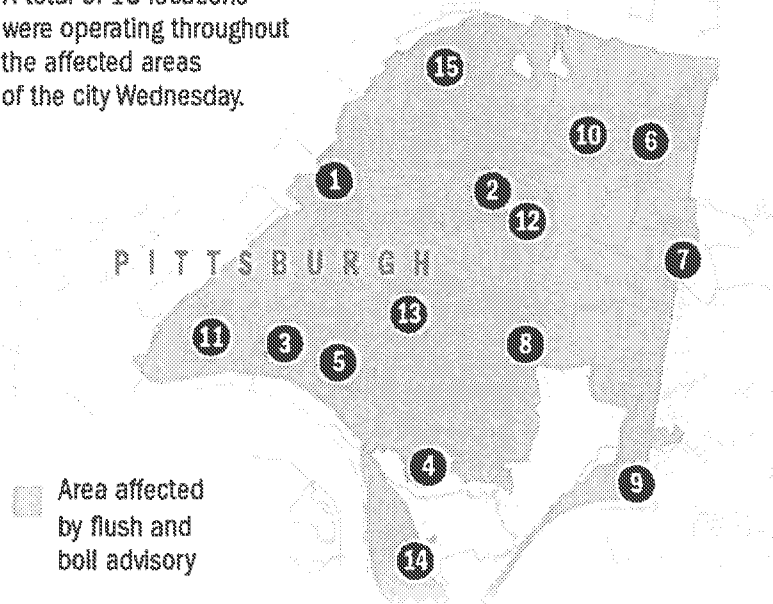
The membrane filter removes all contaminants from the system, he said, including giardia and cryptosporidium, two dangerous parasites that are found in all surface water supplies. Water experts say chlorine is a secondary treatment that simply adds another level of protection.

At another news briefing Wednesday evening, Mr. Lindstrom announced that despite test results finding no contaminants in the water system, PWSA had agreed to immediately take three steps to comply with state standards and get the advisory lifted.

He said the PWSA will conduct an engineering analysis to certify that the micro-membrane filtration system at Highland Park is working properly; it will continue testing to ensure that the authority’s water is meeting state drinking water standards; and it will develop a plan to remove “waters of concern” from the system.

Water distribution sites

A total of 15 locations were operating throughout the affected areas of the city Wednesday.



- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Fire Station 6
3958 Penn Ave., 15224 | 9. Fire Station 19
159 Homestead St., 15218 |
| 2. Fire Station 8
149 N. Euclid Ave., 15206 | 10. Fire Training Academy
1402 Washington Blvd., 15206 |
| 3. Fire Station 10
2501 Allequippa St., 15213 | 11. Shop 'n Save
1850 Centre Ave., 15219 |
| 4. Fire Station 12
4156 Winterburn Ave., 15207 | 12. Giant Eagle
6320 Shakespeare St., 15206 |
| 5. Fire Station 14
259 McKee Place, 15213 | 13. Morewood Gardens Apartments
parking lot, Forbes Ave. &
Morewood St., 15213 |
| 6. Fire Station 15
7024 Lemington Ave., 15206 | 14. Fire Station 13, Hazelwood
200 Flowers Ave., 15207 |
| 7. Fire Station 17
7601 Hamilton Ave., 15208 | 15. Pittsburgh Engine Co. No. 7
4603 Stanton Ave., 15201 |
| 8. Fire Station 18
5858 Northumberland St., 15217 | |

Source: Esri, City of Pittsburgh, Office of Mayor William Peduto Post-Gazette

Removing water likely will involve opening fire hydrants in neighborhoods supplied by the Highland Park Reservoir — more than a third of the city. Mr. Lindstrom said PWSA officials would meet with DEP regulators Thursday morning to review the plan.

Mr. Lindstrom said he didn't know how long it would take to flush the system. "We are 24 hours in providing the requisites needed by the DEP to make that decision," he said. "It could be two more days."

Kevin Acklin, Mayor Bill Peduto's chief of staff, was more optimistic.

"This is a technical issue, not a water quality issue," Mr. Acklin said. "We hope DEP will review the data and will lift [the advisory] as soon as possible."

The mayor said water quality at the Highland Park Reservoir never dipped below federal safe drinking water standards. "If you lived in any other state," Mr. Peduto said, "you'd be drinking the water. We wouldn't be closing down the schools."

Mr. Acklin said the city's 311 emergency response center had fielded 1,200 calls from city residents about the water since

Tuesday, with 500 of the callers asking for the delivery of bottled water.

WATCH: Q&A — Understanding giardia



Residents of Highland Park, from left, Phil Wasler, Bill Johnston and Peter Kope fill the containers from a water buffalo at Fire Station 8 in East Liberty on Wednesday. *(Lake Fong/Post-Gazette)*

Pittsburgh water boil advisory
Posted by Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
4 032 Views

DEP spokesman Neil Shader said the department's order "was not issued lightly," and the low chlorine reading indicated a "breakdown" in disinfection treatment.

But Mr. Lindstrom said a chlorometer — a device used to measure the amount of chlorine in the water — may have been misread or malfunctioned, producing the lower reading that the DEP found unacceptable and that precipitated the boil order.

A low level of chlorine could have allowed giardia, a microscopic parasite, to live in the water supply, although tests have found no contaminants. Ingestion of giardia, which is present in all surface water, including the Allegheny River, where the PWSA draws its water, can result in an intestinal infection

causing cramps, nausea and diarrhea. But no such illnesses attributable to the water supply had been reported, according to the PWSA and area hospitals.

Several water quality experts contacted by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette questioned the need for the boil-water advisory, noting, as did the PWSA's Lindstrom, that the authority's membrane filtration system removes all giardia and cryptosporidium. Correct amounts of chlorine also kill most giardia but not all of it. Cryptosporidium, which can kill people, is immune to chlorine treatment.

Charles Haas, director of the Environmental Engineering Department at Drexel University in Philadelphia who specializes in water treatment and risk assessment, said the DEP's field order "doesn't make any sense."

"A low chlorine reading in a system with a membrane filter doesn't seem like the kind of critical violation that should cause a health concern," Mr. Haas said. "Somebody over in the western end of the state needs to get smart about this."

Gina Cyprych, PWSA director of water quality, said Wednesday afternoon that even if giardia had been found in the water, the possibility of it passing through the membrane filter is "highly, highly unlikely."

She said that as of 10 p.m. Tuesday, the membrane filtration system and the uncovered reservoir had been "taken off line." Mr. Lindstrom said Wednesday evening that putting the system back into operation wasn't part of the compliance plan submitted to the DEP.

The boil water order caused Pittsburgh Public Schools to cancel classes at 22 schools and two early education centers Wednesday, but students at those schools are to report for class Thursday.

Schools spokeswoman Ebony Pugh said principals will remind students not to drink from taps at schools. Water fountains have been covered. Staff will either hand out bottles of water or pour cups of it for younger students. Hand-sanitizer bottles will be available in bathrooms if students are uncomfortable with washing their hands with tap water.

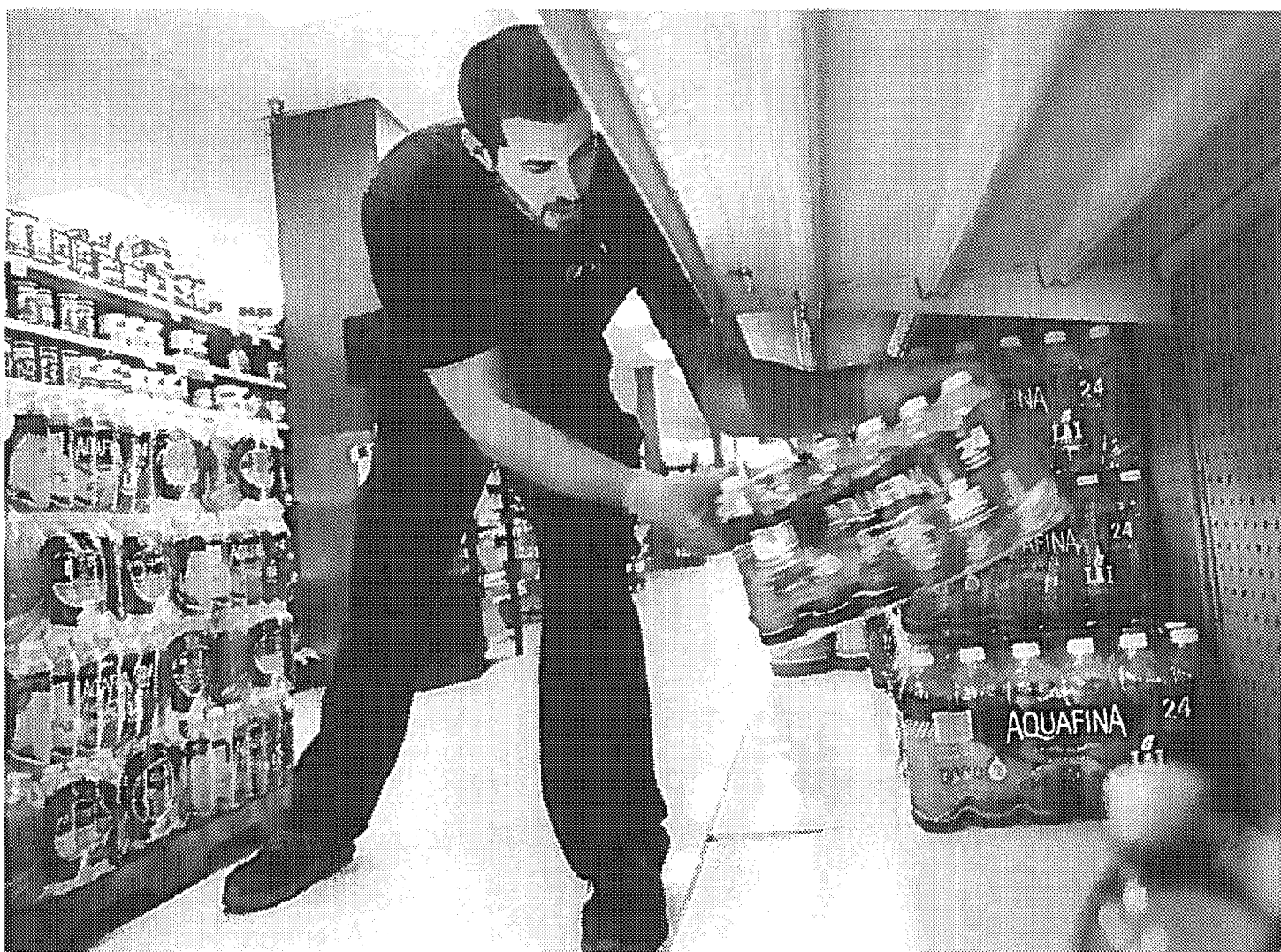


PWSA workers try to reach valves that control the flow of water in and out of Highland Park Reservoir No. 1 on Tuesday outside the membrane filtration plant in Highland Park. (Rebecca Drake/Post-Gazette)

Ms. Pugh also said school menus will be modified this week to include some foods that can be prepared without water.

The situation stoked sharp criticism from Pittsburgh City Council, where some members ripped PWSA's public response to the DEP order. Councilwoman Theresa Kail-Smith renewed an earlier call for state officials to look into the authority, including what she called longtime mismanagement. She cited problems ranging from lead contamination to inaccurate billing.

"This has been decades in the making," Mrs. Kail-Smith said. "I think council should sit down immediately after this to see whether we need an investigation into PWSA."



Christian Marini, a Pepsi employee, delivers cases of bottled water Wednesday at East Liberty's Giant Eagle following the boil-water advisory announced Tuesday. (Haley Nelson/Post-Gazette)

At least four council members said they would support asking Attorney General Josh Shapiro and Auditor General Eugene DePasquale to review PWSA. Mrs. Kail-Smith urged members to sign on to her request. Mr. Shapiro's office did not immediately comment. Mr. DePasquale said his office could audit PWSA only at the authority's invitation but is open to the idea.

Councilman Corey O'Connor, who backed the investigation suggestion, said a FWSA press release Tuesday failed to list Hazelwood among affected neighborhoods. That could have left Hazelwood residents drinking the water for a couple hours before a correction appeared, Mr. O'Connor said.

"The incompetence of not knowing neighborhoods before you send out a press release is an absolute joke," he said. "If even one of those residents got sick from that, it's just an embarrassment."

Mr. Acklin acknowledged the press release error but said it didn't hinder water distribution efforts.

"There's no doubt that there's been decades of disinvestment into this authority," Mr. Acklin said. But he said the immediate water quality concern appears unrelated to that history.

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Pittsburgh water boil advisory lifted for PWSA customers

NATASHA LINDSTROM [✈ \(https://twitter.com/NewsNatasha\)](https://twitter.com/NewsNatasha) | Thursday, Feb. 2, 2017, 11:56 a.m.



Andrew Russell | Tribune-Review

Phil Wasler, Bill Johnston and Peter Kope, all of Highland Park, collect potable water from Fire Station 8 in East Liberty, Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2017.

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority on Thursday lifted the flush and boil water advisory that affected about 100,000 customers for nearly two days.

"First of all, let me apologize to all of our residents in the city of Pittsburgh for this massive inconvenience," PWSA interim Executive Director Bernard R. Lindstrom said. "I know that without a doubt, it created probably many hardships that I will never hear about nor know, and it created uncertainty in many people's minds that may have kept many up at night."

Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto emphasized repeatedly the order was a "precautionary measure" triggered by deficiencies in meeting standards under Pennsylvania's Safe Drinking Water Act, which has more stringent requirements than federal rules.

"There was never a time there was bacteria," Peduto said. "At no time was the public in danger, but as a regulator, the (state) Department of Environmental Protection must take actions when something in the system does not work properly."

By lifting the order at 11:45 a.m., officials from DEP confirmed that drinking water requirements were achieved and there was no risk to the water supply serving the affected central and eastern sections of the city.

"We know that the chlorine system is working properly," said Bob Weimar, PWSA's interim director of engineering.

Trouble began Sunday when PWSA received notice of "erratic" chlorine readings recorded last month at a cholometer outside the filtration plant servicing the Highland Park Reservoir, which supplies water to 60 percent of the city. PWSA adds chlorine as a disinfectant to kill pathogens that might enter the system.

The primary reason for Tuesday afternoon's order, however, was not the "erratic" reading that since has been corrected but rather a technical glitch, PWSA officials clarified Wednesday.

"That's what caused them to look," said Weimar, "but that really isn't the issue."

Regulators issued the boil order Tuesday because they flagged a bigger problem: time that water at the plant was exposed to chlorine.

"The issue in (state regulators') minds was you need to provide a certain amount of protection — they call it a log removal — which is the amount of chlorine you have in the water and the amount of time the water is exposed to it before a customer drinks it," Weimar said.

PWSA had thought it was taking the treated water one to two hours to get to customers, according to Weimar, but testing at DEP's request showed it was taking only 40 to 55 minutes. That placed PWSA about 25 percent below state standards for chlorine contact periods, Weimar said.

Late Wednesday night, PWSA provided DEP with documentation and data to prove the authority achieved compliance. Officials from the city, PWSA and DEP met Thursday morning to discuss the latest analysis.

"We have a job to prove that our system is safe, and we did so," Weimar said.

The authority still must make some changes to the system, including by addressing “five or six points (of pipeline) on the cusp of not meeting that log removal” standard, Weimar said.

The authority also plans to renegotiate its years-old permit with the state, which officials say includes outdated perimeters based on water flow changes in recent years.

In response to the two-day crisis, Pittsburgh Councilwoman Theresa Smith announced Thursday that all council members are requesting an audit by Auditor General Eugene DePasquale and “a thorough investigation” by Attorney General Josh Shapiro. They want the overseers to examine PWSA's procurement process and outside contractors, and in particular a contract with Boston-based Veolia Inc. — the private vendor who ran PWSA's utility operations between July 2012 and December 2015.

Peduto said he welcomes an audit and review by both agencies.

Kevin Acklin, chief of staff to Peduto, pointed out the city has a lawsuit pending against Veolia Inc (<http://triblive.com/news/alleggheny/11296558-74/pwsa-veolia-arbitration/>). Acklin said their contract, which rewarded savings, may have given the private vendor incentive to invest less than they should have into PWSA infrastructure.

PWSA still has several pressing challenges to confront, including lead-level issues stemming from the city's glut of old housing; raw sewage runoffs into local waterways during storms and “well over a decade of disinvestment,” Peduto said. The authority's debt has ballooned to almost \$1 billion, with debt payments eating up almost 50 cents of every \$1 spent by customers.

Lindstrom took the authority's helm in September, after former director Jim Good resigned in March (<http://triblive.com/news/alleggheny/10080218-74/board-authority-customer>) amid mounting customer complaints about overbilling and poor customer service.

“Our morale and our capabilities are probably at an all-time low,” Lindstrom said. “That doesn't mean we're not continuing to try to improve, and it's my job as the leader of the organization to do that, and we have a plan.”

Peduto said the city is ready to put out a Request for Proposals to generate professional guidance and suggestions for models to bring PWSA “into the 21st century.” The mayor suggested revenue-generating options could include the likes of expanding water delivery into areas outside the city.

Natasha Lindstrom is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach her at 412-380-8514 or nlindstrom@tribweb.com.

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DEP, water authority come to agreement that ends city boil-water advisory

February 2, 2017 11:58 AM

By Don Hopey and Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority lifted the precautionary boil water advisory for 100,000 city residents Thursday morning, ending two days of inconvenience, and it began an in-depth review of Highland Park Reservoir water-treatment procedures.

Mayor William Peduto, speaking at a noon news conference, praised PWSA officials who worked late into the night Wednesday to provide the state Department of Environmental Protection with the information it needed to end the boil order.

The state agency directed the water authority to issue the order Tuesday afternoon after low chlorine levels in several tests raised fears that conditions in the water that goes to central and eastern city neighborhoods were favorable for giardia, a parasite that can sicken people and pets.

Subsequent tests found no elevated levels of giardia, and no hospitals reported treating anyone with giardiasis.

“At no time was the public in danger. There was never giardia or bacteria in the water system, and our chlorine exceeded federal and most state requirements,” Mr. Peduto said. “The precautionary [boil water] measure could have lasted three or even seven days, but we were able to resolve it in 42 hours.”

The order was lifted after DEP and PWSA officials, plus Kevin Acklin, Mr. Peduto’s chief of staff, met early Thursday to review data on chlorine levels and water line flushing and received certification that the Highland Park membrane filtration facility was operating properly. The DEP then said the problems had been corrected and state water quality standards had been met.

“We convinced them [the DEP] that the levels of chlorine in the water system were sufficient throughout the system,” Mr. Acklin said. “And we presented data that confirmed that.”

Gina Cyprych, PWSA director of water quality, said the water line flushing required by the DEP was accomplished in 33 hours, by 8 a.m. Thursday.

Bernard R. Lindstrom, PWSA's interim executive director, apologized for the two days of "massive inconvenience."

"We realize this incident created hardships for residents of the city," Mr. Lindstrom said, "but know that our main goal at PWSA is, and will continue to be, providing safe drinking water to our customers."

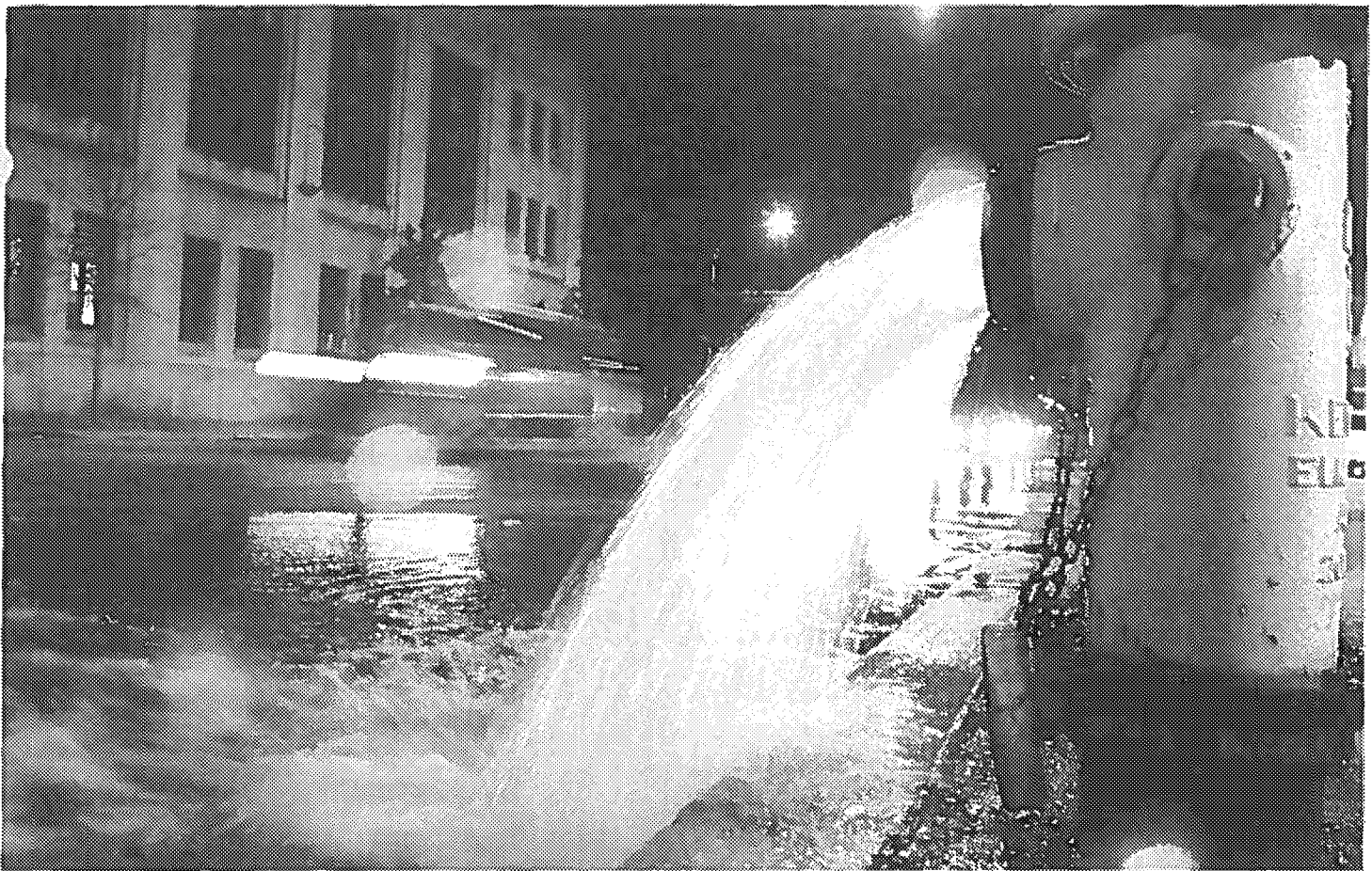
Robert Weimer, PWSA's interim director of engineering and construction, said low chlorine levels in water leaving the uncovered Highland Park Reservoir No. 1 and headed to the membrane treatment plant were "erratic and unexplained."

The membrane filtration plant removes giardia and all other harmful substances from the water. The chlorine is a backup disinfectant. Thursday, the PWSA said the filtration system had been taken off-line while it addresses the low chlorine levels and continues to test the water.

Subsequent tests before the boil-water order revealed other low chlorine readings and indicated that the "contact" time needed to make the chlorine an effective disinfectant wasn't long enough. Instead of taking up to two hours to travel from the filtration plant to the first customer, as PWSA modeled the data in the Highland Park Reservoir's 2002 state permit, water was making that trip in 40 to 55 minutes, Mr. Weimer said.

"That issue was at the forefront of the problem," he said. "We had to submit data we collected and felt there was a reasonable explanation. Based on our measurements and the distribution system, we felt there was no problem."

"But things have changed. It's a dynamic system and we have to provide better controls," Mr. Weimer said. "We want to renegotiate the permit so we can agree with the DEP about what the operating conditions should be."



A fire hydrant runs onto North Euclid Avenue on Thursday in East Liberty. (Darrell Sapp/Post-Gazette)

He said he hopes to have the membrane filtration plant operating again by sometime next week, but until then, additional chlorine will be added to the water. Customers likely will notice a 'swimming pool' smell and taste.

But even after it ended, the boil-water order left a bad taste with many residents and public officials.

City Council wants state authorities to investigate the PWSA. The entire nine-member council has now joined Councilwoman Theresa Kail-Smith's request for a review and audit of PWSA operations by state Auditor General Eugene DePasquale and Attorney General Josh Shapiro, her office said Thursday afternoon.

Council is urging Mr. DePasquale and Mr. Shapiro to look at PWSA's outside contractors, procurement process and "all other areas under their respective jurisdiction," Mrs. Kail-Smith's office said in a statement. Council also wants a review on past arrangements with Veolia North America-Northeast LLC, which had a management contract at PWSA from July 12, 2012, to Dec. 31, 2015.

Council's concerns include high lead levels in water supplied to some city residents and billing issues that have continued for more than two years, according to Mrs. Kail-Smith's office.

PWSA did not immediately comment, although Mr. Lindstrom said at the noon Thursday news conference that he and the rest of PWSA management were aware of low morale internally and the poor public perception of the authority.

"I can assure you, no one is happy with the public perception of PWSA," he said, citing the lead issue, the system's generally aged infrastructure and tight finances. "We have a plan to improve and we are trying to improve."

Mr. Acklin said the Peduto administration would talk with council soon about plans to address infrastructure problems, adding that "some solutions might be found in Harrisburg."

Mr. Peduto said he would welcome any audit of PWSA by Mr. DePasquale or Mr. Shapiro.

Mr. DePasquale has said his office is open to auditing PWSA. But under state rules, he said, PWSA itself would need to request the review. Shapiro spokesman Joe Grace said policy precludes the attorney general's office from discussing whether it's investigating any person or agency.

"Clearly, the water authority has lost the trust of the public, and the administration and council are working toward different solutions," said Councilman Dan Gilman. "I welcome an all-hands-on-deck approach. If there are areas within their jurisdiction where they can take a look and provide advice, I would gladly welcome that."

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Foul waters: The city cannot tolerate more PWSA failure

February 3, 2017 12:00 AM

By the Editorial board

The latest debacle involving the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority forced about 100,000 residents to boil their drinking water from Tuesday afternoon to noon Thursday. While city officials and some experts have downplayed the risk posed by the low chlorine levels found in the water, that does not change the salient facts: PWSA was out of compliance with state standards for drinking water and much of the city was inconvenienced as a result.

No more excuses. Bernard R. Lindstrom began serving as interim executive director in September. If he is not up to the job, he must go. If employees are falling down on the job, they must be sent on their way. If PWSA board members aren't up to their oversight responsibilities, they should step down or be forced to resign. It's time for Mayor Bill Peduto to sharpen his ax and show that he's as tired of PWSA's screw-ups as the rest of us are.

Instead, he and his chief of staff, Kevin Acklin, downplayed the violation. Mr. Peduto said the water met federal standards and would be considered safe in any other state. Mr. Acklin called the problem a "technical issue, not a water-quality issue." It was both, and if the lead crisis in Flint, Mich., showed anything, it was the need for public officials to double down on drinking water standards.

The city has a membrane filtration system to screen out contaminants, including giardia, a parasite that causes intestinal problems. Chlorine is a second source of protection against giardia. When a test showed low levels of chlorine in the PWSA's water, the state Department of Environmental Protection ordered the boil-water advisory, which affected about half of the PWSA's customers. In addition to the inconvenience customers faced at home, the advisory affected operations at restaurants and other businesses, led to the closure of 22 city schools and two early-childhood education centers for a day and forced nearly a dozen fire stations to take on the additional role of water distribution centers.

The boil-water advisory was lifted Thursday after the proper chlorine level had been restored.

The chlorine debacle was another sign of organizational chaos and slipshod management at PWSA, which in recent years has made headlines for the hiring of political hacks, an illegal line warranty program,

stormwater-management problems, inaccurate billing, customer-service complaints, a legal dispute with its former management firm, a rebuke from the DEP for changing treatment chemicals without permission and the botched hiring of Mr. Lindstrom's predecessor, Kenneth Charles Griffin, whose performance at a previous job raised questions. For putting up with all that, PWSA customers were socked with a 13 percent rate increase this year.

If it wants to get ahead, Pittsburgh needs a stable water system. Bike lanes and riverfront trails won't mean much to prospective residents and employers if the city's drinking water has to be boiled.

If the city no longer has the wherewithal to operate its own water system, it should consider selling to Pennsylvania-American Water Co., a publicly traded utility that already provides service to some of the city's western and southern neighborhoods. City residents served by Pennsylvania-American were unaffected by PWSA's boil-water advisory.

City council members want state Attorney General Josh Shapiro or state Auditor General Eugene DePasquale to review PWSA's operations. Additional outside views may help, but city officials must take ownership of this agency. That means finding out what caused a drop in the chlorine level and making sure it never happens again.

In August, Mr. Peduto called for an "overhaul of the culture" at PWSA. We're waiting.

Replacing homeowners' service lines atop Peduto's wish list in possible PWSA restructuring

NATASHA LINDSTROM [✉](https://twitter.com/NewsNatasha) (<https://twitter.com/NewsNatasha>) | Friday, Feb. 3, 2017, 6:09 p.m.



Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto

City officials say there's a major obstacle to eradicating lead from Pittsburgh's drinking water: Most homeowners can't afford to replace their aging, lead-laden pipes.

As part of a plan announced Friday, Mayor Bill Peduto said he wants to find a private partner willing to do it for them.

The goal is to find a private company to acquire part ownership in the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority in exchange for committing to invest in the cash-strapped authority's infrastructure, Kevin Acklin, chief of staff to Peduto, told the Tribune-Review.

Acklin said the commitment should include a willingness by that partner to replace residential service lines — underground pipes running from buildings to water mains. Under state law, the authority cannot spend money on private lines, Acklin said.

The Peduto administration early Friday issued a request for proposals (<https://procurement.pittsburghpa.gov/beacon/opportunities/227>) from teams with financial and legal expertise to devise long-term strategies for improving PWSA's operations, customer service and value as a public asset.

At a news conference Thursday, Peduto lamented that “after well over a decade of disinvestment” in PWSA, “We may have lost the asset.”

The authority has so much debt — approaching \$1 billion — that 50 cents of every \$1 billed to customers gets spent toward paying it off, Peduto has said.

Yet the notion of even partially privatizing PWSA rattled some observers.

Allegheny County Controller Chelsa Wagner accused the Peduto administration of continuing “to duck and hide in the face of our water crisis.” She slammed Peduto's approach of bringing on a private partner as “dead wrong.”

“Privatization of our public water utility — which the mayor tried to mask in today's proposal as a public-private partnership — will result in lower health and environmental standards and increased customer rates,” Wagner said.

As for replacing private service lines, Wagner spokesman Lou Takacs said the controller “doesn't feel that privatization is necessary to accomplish that particular goal.”

Peduto clarified that although he called for “a full financial and operations partner,” the city does not want to hand over full control to a private vendor.

PWSA hired Boston-based Veolia Inc. to manage the utility between 2012 and 2015 but in October sued the company for \$12.5 million, claiming it created problems that led to state violations.

PWSA's restructuring model could involve taking on private and public partners to expand its water service delivery or water credits to areas outside of Pittsburgh because the authority has more water than it needs to serve residents, Acklin said. Such an expansion would involve collaboration — and potentially consolidations or mergers — with other municipal water and sewer authorities.

“Every city that is dealing with an aging water infrastructure is considering these issues,” Acklin said. “Scranton recently went through with a proposal, I believe an outright sale to a private operator (<http://www.philly.com/philly/blogs/inq-phillydeals/American-Water-taking-PA-NI-sewage-private.html>) . Allentown did another proposal where they were able to merge with another utility (http://articles.mcall.com/2013-06-29/news/mc-lehigh-county-authority-bid-finance-20130629_1_lca-spokeswoman-liesel-adam-sewer-lease-allentown-water/2/) .”

PWSA's board and executive staff issued a statement expressing support for Peduto's initiative.

Talks about seeking partners to improve PWSA have been going on for about six months, Acklin said, and the flush and boil order lifted Thursday (<http://triblive.com/local/alleggheny/11883888-74/pwsa-weimar-authority>) that affected more than 100,000 customers this week reaffirmed the urgency to find them.

"The public is dealing with the billing issues and the lead issues as well as having a boil order issued," said Acklin. "We wanted to show clearly that we are not going to turn away from these problems; we're going to address them head on."

On Thursday, PWSA interim Executive Director Bernard L. Lindstrom, who took the helm in September, described the authority as being at an "all-time low" in terms of not only staff and customer morale but also capabilities.

Proposals for restructuring PWSA are due Feb. 24, and city officials will aim to choose one by the end of the month, Acklin said.

In the meantime, homeowners who suspect they have a lead problem should let their faucets run for a minute before using or drinking water, which should help to flush any loose lead particulates, Acklin said.

"It's good advice just to flush your waters," said Acklin, who lives in Squirrel Hill, among the areas that were affected by the flush and boil order. "I've been doing it for years."

Natasha Lindstrom is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach her at 412-380-8514 or nlindstrom@tribweb.com. Staff writer Theresa Clift contributed.

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Pittsburgh water customers frustrated by long waits for lead tests

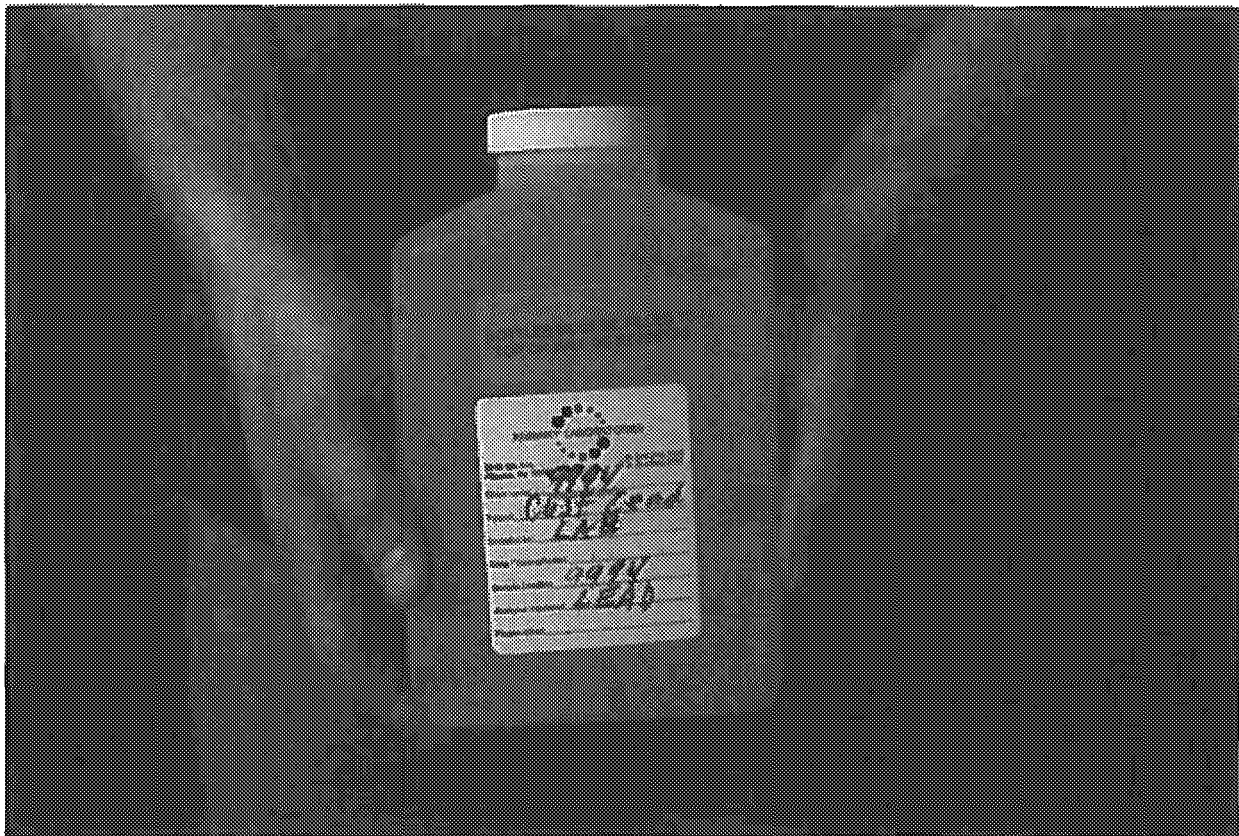
After learning his 9-month-old daughter had lead poisoning during a routine pediatrician visit last summer, Brandon Blache-Cohen and his wife were perplexed. They needed to know ...

(<http://triblive.com/local/alleggheny/11877692-74/pwsa-lead-results>)

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Pittsburgh water customers frustrated by long waits for lead tests

THERESA CLIFT [✉](https://twitter.com/TClift) (<https://twitter.com/TClift>) | Friday, Feb. 3, 2017, 6:42 p.m.



Justin Merriman | Tribune Review

A water test for lead in 2016.

After learning his 9-month-old daughter had lead poisoning during a routine pediatrician visit last summer, Brandon Blache-Cohen and his wife were perplexed.

They needed to know the lead's source — water, soil or paint — as soon as possible.

They quickly submitted a water sample from their 1920s Squirrel Hill home for lead testing, a free service the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority offers to its 83,000 residential customers.

After two months, the couple still had not received a result, Blache-Cohen said.

Of the 3,057 water samples PWSA customers sent to be tested for lead last year, more than half — 1,612 — took longer than a month to get results, according to authority data the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review obtained through a Right-to-Know Law request.

PWSA estimates customers should receive results three to three and a half weeks after the lab receives the sample, according to its webpage on lead testing.

When customers received their results, about 11 percent of samples — 333 — learned bad news: The lead level exceeded a key federal regulatory threshold of 15 parts per billion.

On Thursday, a PWSA flush and boil advisory that affected 60 percent of the city was lifted after nearly two days, prompting city and PWSA officials to refocus on lead reduction efforts.

"We'd like to advance that. We'd like to be more aggressive," said Kevin Acklin, chief of staff to Mayor Bill Peduto, referring to an U.S. Environmental Protection Agency mandate to replace lead service lines.

RESULTS

After waiting two months for a result, Blache-Cohen contacted his Pittsburgh City Council representative, Councilman Corey O'Connor of Squirrel Hill.

After that, a PWSA representative called to give him the results — 8.2 ppb, Blache-Cohen said. It took another month to get the results in writing.

"It was a frustrating experience — the lack of transparency and, most importantly, the lack of communication," Blache-Cohen said.

He later learned the source of the lead in his daughter's blood was likely paint in the family's home or a neighbor's.

"We had the means and resources to hire a private inspector to help us, but we found ourselves really concerned about a large portion of our community that wouldn't have that resource," Blache-Cohen said.

O'Connor, who represents Hazelwood, Glen Hazel, Greenfield, Hays, Lincoln Place, New Homestead, Regent Square, Squirrel Hill South and Swisshelm Park, has received seven requests for help with delayed PWSA test results from his constituents since July, said Curt Conrad, O'Connor's chief of staff.

"Usually by the time they come to us, they've already gone through the PWSA process and contacted customer service," Conrad said.

County Controller Chelsa Wagner waited four months to get results for her Squirrel Hill home.

Wagner sent in a sample in late August, but PWSA lost it, Will Pickering, a PWSA spokesman, confirmed.

At the end of October, Wagner inquired about the status of her sample. PWSA sent two more kits in mid-November, Pickering said. The results arrived Dec. 20 — one of which came back 26 ppb, well over the EPA threshold.

In a December performance audit, Wagner criticized the Allegheny County Health Department for not doing enough to combat the issue of lead in water.

While some customers wait months for test results, others wait weeks to receive the lead testing kit.

Jesse Perkins requested a test kit for his Lawrenceville home, but after waiting a month, it hadn't arrived, he said. The kits are supposed to arrive 10 to 14 business days from the time requested, according to PWSA's website.


He asked a PWSA board member for help, and after going through a few different people, he eventually got a kit.

"It wasn't a smooth process," Perkins said.

The results in December showed 64.8 ppb — more than five times the EPA threshold.

SCATTERED RESULTS

Of the 10 ZIP codes where at least 100 households submitted samples, the 15211 ZIP code had the highest percentage that tested above 15 ppb. From that ZIP code, which includes the Mt. Washington and Duquesne Heights neighborhoods, 27 of the 131 household samples received — 20.6 percent — showed more than 15 ppb of lead.



[OpenStreetMap contributors](#)

1 965 views

The 15207 ZIP code had the second-highest number of samples above 15 ppb — 16 of 102, or 15.6 percent. That ZIP code contains Hazelwood, Greenfield, Glenwood, Glen Hazel, Hays and Lincoln Place.

In looking at the sample results, it's important to note that the tests are far from scientific, Pickering said.

The tests are voluntary, and people who know they likely have lead service lines are more likely to send in a sample, Pickering said. There's also room for human error, when people don't follow or understand the kit's directions.

PWSA hasn't been able to detect a pattern in the lead test results.

"Originally we were hoping there would be entire streets with the problem," Pickering said. "From an engineering aspect, it's easier to remove all the (lead lines) on one block. But there really aren't those neighborhood hot spots people want to expect."

That risk is especially high for an aging city like Pittsburgh.

About 20 to 25 percent of PWSA's residential customers have lead service lines, typically the source of lead in PWSA water. The authority has started a replacement program for lead pipes in public spaces.

Residents of the 15217 ZIP code, which includes Squirrel Hill and Greenfield, submitted the most water samples for lead testing in 2016. Of 763 samples, 85 tested above 15 ppb — 11 percent.

PWSA doesn't plan to replace more pipes in the 15217 ZIP code because there were more tests, Pickering said.

"We're making every effort to evenly distribute the replacement works throughout the city," he said.

INCREASED DEMAND

The authority typically receives about 25 requests for lead test kits a year. Last year, it received more than 6,000 requests. About half submitted samples, Pickering said.

Test requests increased after the Flint, Mich., water crisis, which gained national attention in the fall of 2015. The Trib reported in January 2016 that PWSA's lead levels were near the EPA's threshold of 15 parts per billion.

In July, when PWSA's 90th percentile water sample result of 22 ppb officially exceeded the EPA 15 ppb threshold, prompting PWSA to send out letters reminding customers about free tests, the number of samples submitted increased, Pickering said.

PWSA will send out a similar letter this month, Pickering said, after the authority's December 90th percentile result dipped to 18 ppb — still in excess of the threshold.

To handle the increased demand, PWSA now contracts with two labs for lead testing. At one point in 2016, the authority used three labs, but it dropped one because of performance issues such as long wait times, Pickering said.

To reduce issues with the free lead testing process, PWSA made changes in September, including shifting responsibility from PWSA to the lab to deliver and receive test kits and results and enter data.

"We felt it was the right thing to do to offer the free testing, but we knew there were missteps," Pickering said. "We're now fully confident the existing process is working."

The expectation now is that no one should be waiting longer than a month, Pickering said.

PWSA customers can email servicelines@pgh20.com to request a test or check on the status of a test. Those who have been waiting more than a month are encouraged to do so, Pickering said.

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(<http://triblive.com/local/allegHENY/11890509-74/acklin-peduto-pwsa>)

EPA slams state drinking water program

February 4, 2017 12:05 AM

Don Hohey / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Federal regulators have strongly criticized the state Department of Environmental Protection for failures in the administration of its safe drinking water program.

According to a Dec. 30 letter from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to the DEP, a lack of funding has caused staffing cuts, significantly reducing the number of public water system inspections and creating a situation that “can have serious public health implications as major violations could be going unidentified.”

If the state Safe Drinking Water Program can't meet minimum federal inspection and regulation requirements, the letter warned, the DEP could be required to cede control of the program to the EPA.

“We've seen no actual health problems, but the reason we sent the letter is to make sure that doesn't happen,” said Rick Rogers, acting deputy director of EPA's regional water protection division.

He said DEP budget cuts have caused staffing reductions of more than 20 percent in the DEP's Bureau of Safe Drinking Water.

While most other state drinking water programs in the EPA's Mid-Atlantic Region have also suffered budget cuts, Mr. Rogers said, only Pennsylvania has been sent a letter outlining multiple program deficiencies and been required to submit a written “action plan” detailing how the state will provide the resources to meet the minimum federal water program requirements.

Neil Shader, a DEP spokesman, issued a statement saying the department agrees with the federal critique of the state's program, which, earlier this week issued a boil water order for 100,000 city residents receiving water from the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority's filtration plant and Highland Park Reservoir No. 1. The boil water order was based on inconsistent and low chlorine test results that raised concerns about giardia contamination that proved to be unfounded. But the PWSA water system, serving 83,000 household customers, has also experienced higher lead levels in water supplied to some homes.

“The DEP is aware of the concerns expressed by EPA in regards to staffing levels and resources, and shares those concerns,” Mr. Shader said. “The EPA's concerns are well-founded, and without additional

investment, the problems outlined by EPA will continue to be exacerbated.”

He said the DEP is discussing how best to address the programmatic and staffing shortfalls with its technical advisory committee.

The EPA, in its letter, said that over the past six years the number of drinking water program inspections, known as ‘sanitary surveys,’ has “significantly declined,” dropping from 3,177 in fiscal 2009-10 to 1,847 in fiscal 2015-16. The DEP is supposed to do the full, top-to-bottom sanitary surveys of each public water system every three years.

Because of staff reductions, the average number of water systems each DEP inspector is responsible for is 149. The national average is less than half that — 67 water systems per inspector.


“We know the DEP water program staff remaining is excellent, and are doing the best with the resources they have,” Mr. Rogers said. But the agency’s letter noted that the “excessive workload is not sustainable and program performance will continue to suffer.”

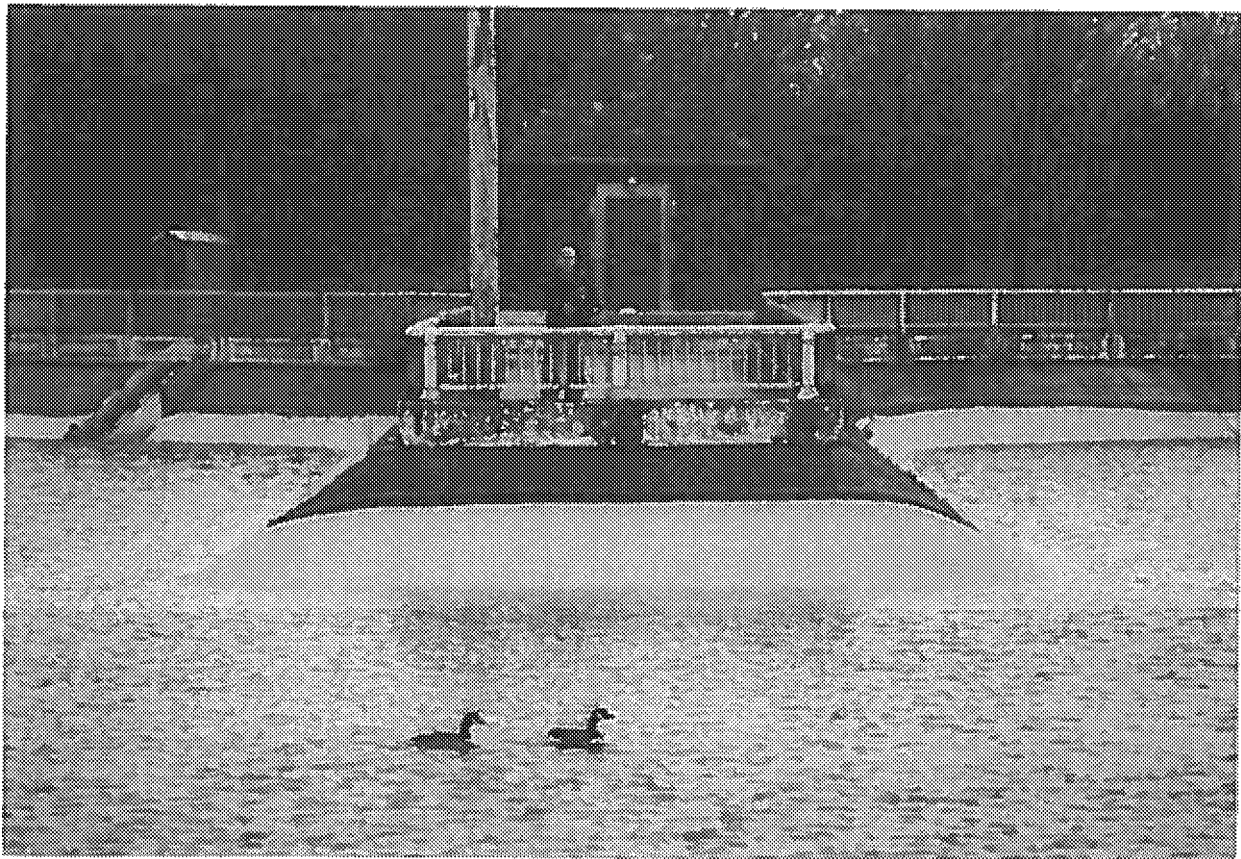
The number of “unaddressed violations,” that is violations identified by inspections but not resolved, has risen from 4,298 to 7,922.

“We were concerned about the direction of the program,” Mr. Rogers said, “and wanted to make sure the state turns it around before things get any worse.”

Don Hopey: dhopey@post-gazette.com, 412-263-1983, or on Twitter @donhopey

Pittsburgh mayor calls for investigation of water issues

BOB BAUDER  (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2017, 10:18 a.m.



Andrew Russell | Tribune-Review

A man throws bread to the geese at the Highland Park Reservoir on Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2017. Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto called for a “targeted investigation” into recent water issues in the city.

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority worked to reopen a shuttered Highland Park reservoir Tuesday while Mayor Bill Peduto took steps to learn exactly what caused its closure.

Peduto directed the Office of Municipal Investigations (OMI) to discover why PWSA was forced to issue a flush-and-boil water advisory last week, causing upheaval for about 100,000 city residents.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection ordered the boil advisory because of a breakdown in chlorine treatment at the 125 million gallon Highland Park Reservoir. Residents were required to boil water from Jan. 31 to Thursday.

"This is not a fishing expedition. We simply want to discover what went wrong and how to keep these events from happening again," Peduto said in a statement.

Peduto spokesman Tim McNulty said OMI typically investigates complaints only against city employees, but Peduto wanted a professional team to find out exactly what caused the chlorine glitch.

"This is a unique situation," McNulty said. "The mayor, with support of the (PWSA) board, just wanted them to ask some questions while last week's incident is still fresh in the minds of people."

The PWSA board on Tuesday approved an invitation for Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro and Auditor General Eugene DePasquale to conduct a review of authority operations. City Council on Friday asked both agencies for a similar review.

Councilwoman Deb Gross of Highland Park, who serves on the PWSA board, said she "wholeheartedly" supports a state examination of the authority.

"It's time for a combined effort to find out how we can do things better," she said.

Shapiro's office declined to comment. DePasquale said he would outline his plans later in February.

"My team is already evaluating our options for such an examination so that we can offer as much help as possible to the authority and to the city to ensure that all Pittsburghers can be assured of a safe and abundant supply of clean drinking water," DePasquale said in a statement.

DEP ordered the boil order because it discovered that water in the city's only open reservoir was insufficiently exposed to chlorine. Known as Highland Park No. 1, the landmark pool dating to 1879 is one of two reservoirs in Highland Park and serves as a popular attraction for walkers and city visitors.

The other reservoir — Highland Park No. 2 — is enclosed beneath a cover along with all other city water sources. PWSA spokesman Will Pickering said Highland Park No. 2 remains in operation.

He said authority staff must prove to DEP that it meets chlorine requirements at Highland Park No. 1. Officials last week said water was leaving the reservoir too quickly and fell 25 percent below state standards for chlorine contact periods.

Water is treated and chlorinated at the authority's Aspinwall waterworks and pumped to the reservoir, where it is again treated at an on-site plant. Because Highland Park No. 1 is an open reservoir, PWSA treats the water again with chlorine and runs it through a series of microfilters before it is sent to residents.

"From the minute we took it off line, we were working to get it back online," Pickering said. "It's going to require additional water-quality data to be shared with (DEP)."

DEP declined to comment.

OMI has started its investigation and will conduct interviews with PWSA employees to evaluate operations and staffing of its water systems as well as equipment the authority uses to filter and test water, according to the mayor's office.

Additionally, Peduto is calling for an audit of lead testing kits and results sent to authority customers (<http://triblive.com/local/alleggheny/11877692-74/pwsa-lead-results>) . From January through December 2016, 6,625 testing kits were ordered from the PWSA, but less than half (3,100) were returned for review.

Bob Bauder is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach him at 412-765-2312 or bbauder@tribweb.com.

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Four PWSA workers suspended over water pressure problems

February 11, 2017 8:31 AM

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Four employees of the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority have been suspended after a malfunctioning pump caused low or no water pressure for some city residents for several hours.

People woke up today to see brown or discolored water when they ran their taps — a result of the water pressure issues from overnight.

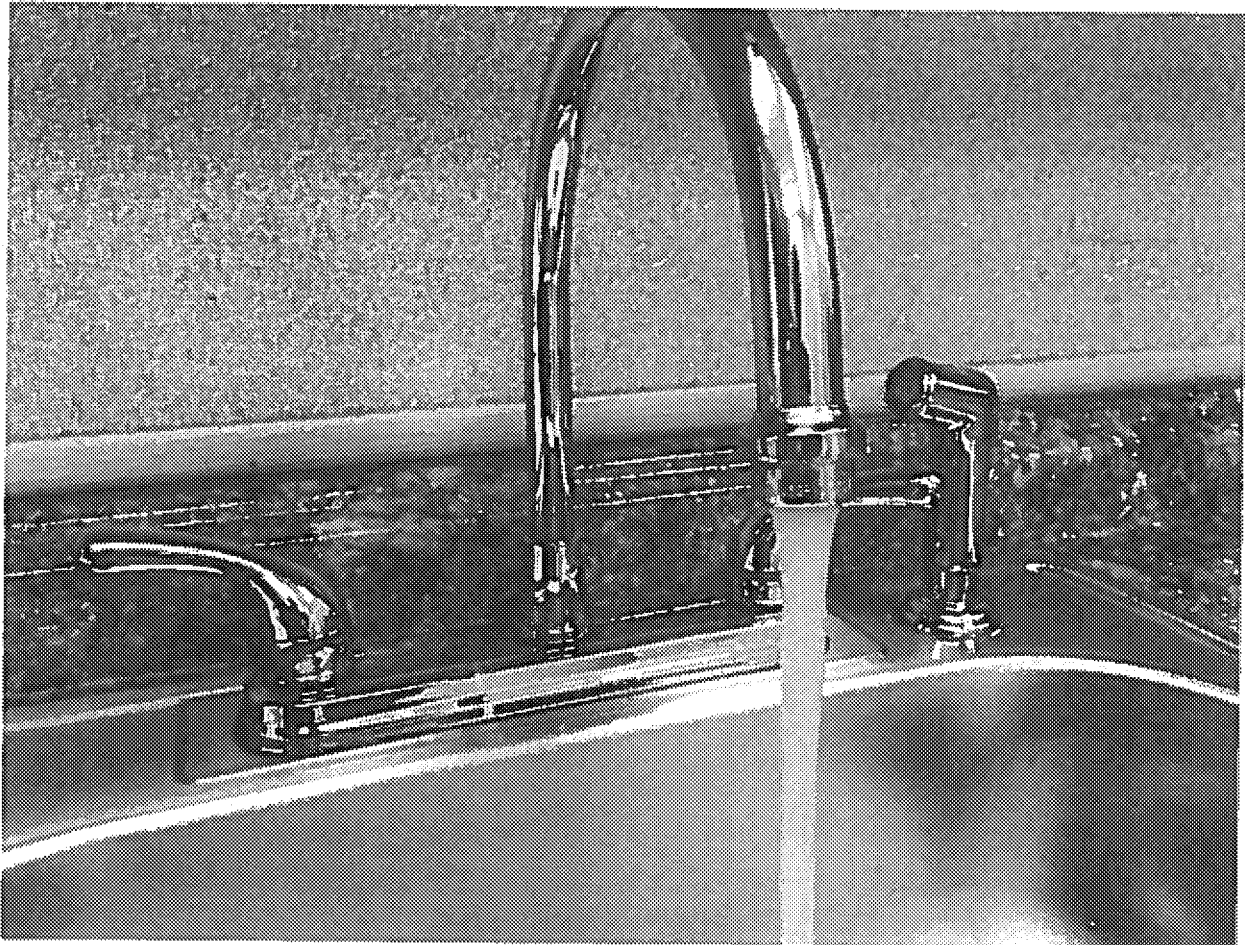
The PWSA said the pressure issues stemmed from the temporary failure of a water pump at the authority's Bruecken pump station. The problem resulted in low to no water pressure in eastern city neighborhoods from about 10:30 p.m. Friday night to 1:30 a.m. Saturday for those residents living in Bloomfield, Friendship, Garfield, Morningside, Oakland, Shadyside and Swisshelm Park.

Will Pickering, PWSA communications manager, attributed the problem to operator error and lack of communication afterward. He said that as a result, four employees have been suspended with pay pending the results of an investigation.

The PWSA had advised residents to run their tap water for a few minutes, waiting until the water runs clear before drinking it. Also, PWSA workers opened fire hydrants to flush the affected water out of the system.

Some Pittsburgh water customers advised to flush water from faucets before using

TRIBUNE-REVIEW | Saturday, Feb. 11, 2017, 9:10 a.m.



Tribune-Review

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority on Saturday advised customers in some eastern areas of the city to allow cold water to flow from their faucets for several minutes before using, a result of a mechanical failure at the Bruecken pump station that caused a

temporary pressure loss.

The PWSA suspended four employees "while the situation is investigated," mayoral spokesman Tim McNulty said. The names of the employees were not released.

They were suspended for "unacceptable operator error leading to low pressure situation throughout East End," McNulty said.

Although the pump was returned to service and water pressure levels are back to normal, some customers may see brown or discolored water, PWSA said.

Crews opened hydrants to clear discolored water from the system, according to PWSA.

Customers can call the authority at 412-255-2423 if they are experiencing a water emergency.

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DEP, meet EPA: The feds take notice of Pa. water monitoring

February 13, 2017 12:00 AM

By the Editorial Board

Despite many improvements in pollution controls over the years, water quality remains an urgent matter. Fiscal belt-tightening in the state agency that oversees water systems may be creating a health problem for Pennsylvanians.


Awareness of this problem is growing. First came the Flint, Mich., crisis that brought this issue to the nation's attention last year. Then the issue rose to the surface with a boil-water advisory affecting 100,000 Pittsburghers in the past month. Now comes the public release of a letter from the federal Environmental Protection Agency to our state government, severely criticizing the state's monitoring of water systems.

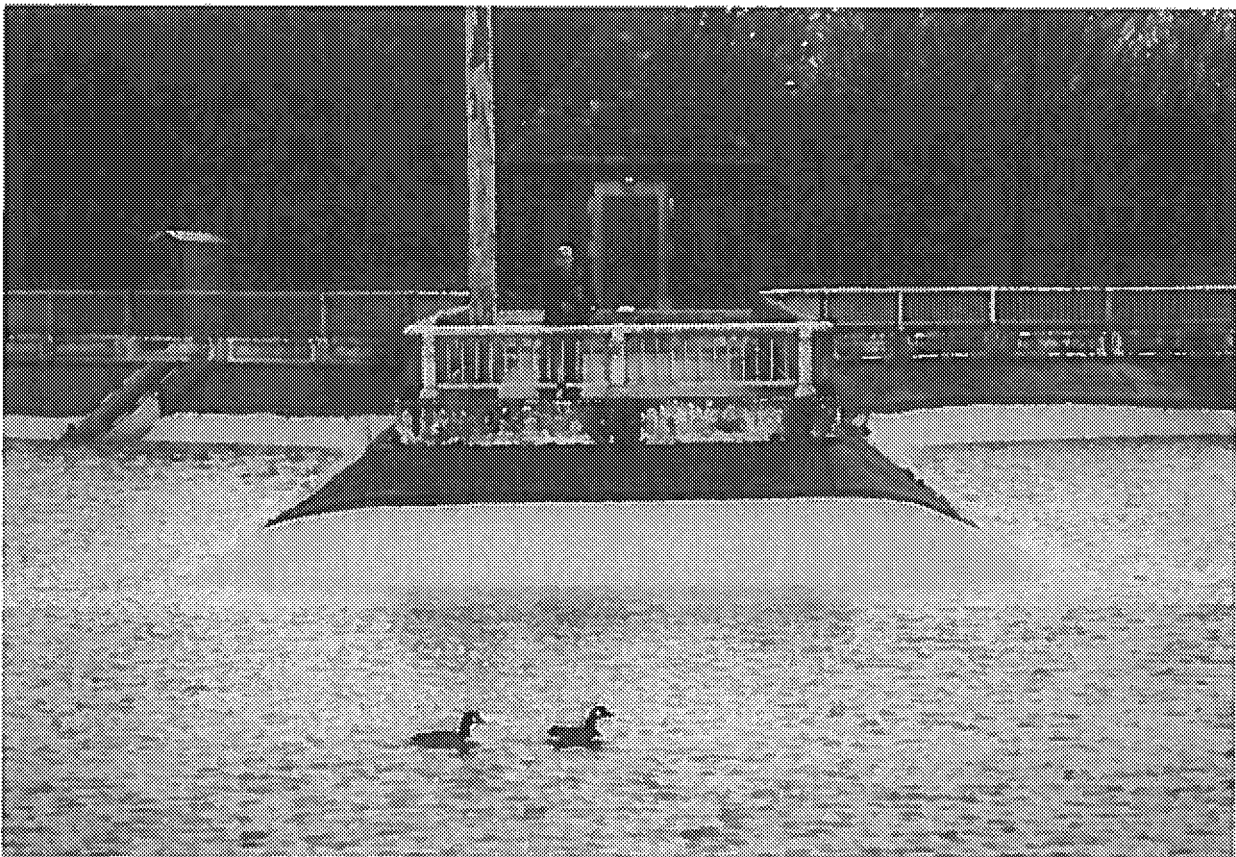
According to the EPA, budget cuts have caused staffing reductions of more than 20 percent at the Bureau of Safe Drinking Water in the state Department of Environmental Protection. The average number of water systems that each DEP inspector must now monitor is 149, while the national average for inspectors is 67. The number of inspections in our state, which are to be carried out every three years for each water system, has declined rapidly.

EPA officials point out that they have not yet detected health risks for Pennsylvania residents, but they issued the letter as a warning to prevent an emergency. Other states in the region have also reduced their inspection staffs, but our state was the only one to receive a letter citing several deficiencies and requiring a written plan for improvement. DEP officials say they are well aware of the problems cited in the letter.

Just as we have strongly backed a top-to-bottom review of the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, we also urge the state to assess the Bureau of Safe Drinking Water. Will it take a Flint-type crisis to make our state legislators and department heads take action?

PWSA working to pinpoint leak in reservoir servicing North Side

BOB BAUDER  (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2017, 2:06 p.m.



Andrew Russell | Tribune-Review

A man throws bread to the geese at the Highland Park Reservoir on Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2017. Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto called for a "targeted investigation" into recent water issues in the city.

A Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority reservoir system feeding about 45,000 North Side residents is losing water at a rate of 10,000 gallons per minute, which represents about 20

percent of PWSA's average daily water production, the authority reported Wednesday night.

PWSA crews are working to pinpoint the exact location of the leak in the Lanpher Reservoir service area, but officials said earlier that it could be in piping under the Allegheny River. Lanpher is in Shaler and has a capacity of 133 million gallons. The authority reported that the leak represents no risk to water quality or supply.

PWSA can feed water to the North Side, if necessary, from the Highland Park No. 2 Reservoir, which can hold up to 125 million gallons and is being filled to capacity. The authority was losing water from both reservoirs, but isolated the leak to the Lanpher system by closing valves on mains that cross the river.

Water levels in Highland Park are increasing.

The leak is the latest problem at the troubled authority, which has been plagued by chronic debt, infrastructure dating to the Civil War and, most recently, water-quality issues including high lead levels.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection last week issued a boil water order for 100,000 East End residents because water testing in a second Highland Park reservoir indicated fluctuating chlorine levels that ranged from zero to very high. Highland Park No. 1 Reservoir will remain offline until PWSA can demonstrate consistent levels of chlorine in the reservoir.

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Pittsburgh's only open-air reservoir might be more trouble than it's worth

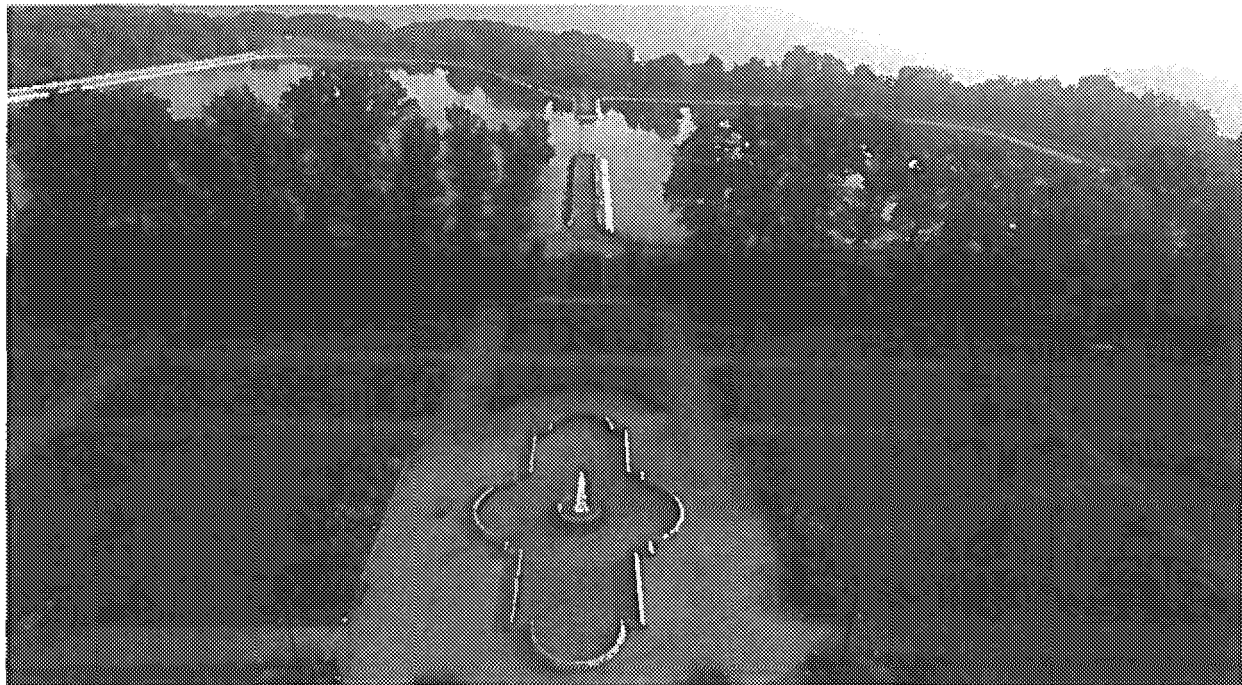
The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority doesn't need water from the open-air reservoir in Highland Park that triggered a nearly two-day boil order, but it ...

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Pittsburgh's only open-air reservoir might be more trouble than it's worth

BOB BAUDER  (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2017, 9:18 p.m.



Steven Adams | Tribune-Review

File photo - The Entry Garden and reservoir at Highland Park in Pittsburgh, Saturday, August 29, 2015.

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority doesn't need water from the open-air reservoir in Highland Park that triggered a nearly two-day boil order, but it has kept it open nonetheless, pleasing visitors who enjoy running and walking by the open water.

Robert Weimar, PWSA's interim director of engineering, said the authority plans to eliminate the Highland Park No. 1 Reservoir because of state Department of Environmental Protection concerns about its ability to meet regulations and because

PWSA has more than enough storage capacity.

"It becomes more of an artifact of public use than water supply," Weimar said. "What we would probably end up doing is bleeding a little bit of water into it and a little bit of water out of it to keep it fresh."

PWSA customers use 70 million gallons of water per day, on average, and the authority has capacity to store about 480 million gallons in six reservoirs and eight tanks across the city and surrounding area, PWSA spokesman Will Pickering said.

David Hance, an architect and Highland Park resident who led a 10-year battle in the 1990s to preserve Highland Park No. 1 as an open reservoir, said he was shocked to hear PWSA is considering eliminating it. He said PWSA officials always maintained the reservoir was necessary.

"To hear now that they think they can run the city with that big of a change in the operations and design of the system is a shock," said Hance, president of the Highland Park Community Development Corp. "That's a reversal."

Highland No. 1, the city's only uncovered water source, can supply water to about 60 percent of Pittsburgh, but it has remained off-line two weeks after PWSA recorded fluctuating chlorine levels that prompted DEP to issue a boil water order impacting about 100,000 Pittsburgh residents.

Weimar said the authority is adding chlorine, a water disinfectant, in an attempt to get the 130 million gallon reservoir back in operation. It has not uncovered the reason for fluctuating readings. Weimar said PWSA must demonstrate consistent amounts of chlorine before DEP will let it use the reservoir.

City and PWSA officials have said they found no signs of giardia or other pathogens in the water.

Weimar said to eliminate Highland Park No. 1, PWSA would have to design and build a system that would cost as much as \$20 million to pump water from nearby Highland Park No. 2 Reservoir, which is covered, into the Highland No. 1 distribution system.

Weimar said the new system would take about five years to complete and be subject to DEP approval.

"It is certainly one of the things we're looking at," said Alex Thomson, who chairs the PWSA board of directors. "The short-term plan is to resolve the issues and get (the reservoir) back online."

Built in 1879, the reservoir was central in the design of Highland Park and since has served as an attraction for tourists and residents who visit to run, bike or walk and to watch wildlife. People stroll daily around a walkway encompassing the 18-acre lake located at the main park entrance.

The reservoir is unique because it remains uncovered. As such, it is subject to an added layer of treatment and regulatory scrutiny.

A state law in the 1980s required the covering of all open drinking water reservoirs and prompted a public outcry and battle by residents to prevent Highland Park No. 1 from being covered.

At one point, then-PWSA Chairman Joe Preston, who later served as a Democratic state representative from East Liberty, said he offered to sell the reservoir to Highland Park Residents for \$1.

"Originally we wanted to build tanks and close the reservoir," he said. "People were against that. So we settled when we found out about the technology of the microfiltration plant."

Regulatory agencies approved the project after PWSA built the plant, which pushes reservoir water through a series of tiny mesh filters to remove pathogens such as giardia. Pickering said the plant, which opened in 2002, cost about \$30 million.

The plant was an engineering marvel at the time, and PWSA officials said it has been more effective than chlorine for disinfecting drinking water. Chlorine is added as a back-up disinfectant, Weimar said.

Bob Bauder is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach him at 412-765-2312 or bbauder@tribweb.com (<mailto:bbauder@tribweb.com>).

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Before boil orders, PWSA made unauthorized changes in water-treatment chemicals

February 16, 2017 12:00 AM

By Don Hohey / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Three weeks before the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority was ordered to tell 100,000 Pittsburghers to boil their water, the state Department of Environmental Protection found that the authority made changes to its water treatment chemicals without approval from the state.

It was the second time in three years that unauthorized changes to treatment chemicals landed the PWSA in hot water. More bad news for the embattled authority could come as early as this morning, when Pittsburgh Controller Michael Lamb, accompanied by Pennsylvania Auditor General Eugene DePasquale, will release a performance audit of the region's largest water supplier.

According to the DEP, on Jan. 6, state inspectors at the PWSA's main treatment plant along the Allegheny River in Aspinwall found the facility was using ferric chloride and caustic soda as coagulating agents in place of lime because the lime feed equipment was not operational. The permit violation was noted in a DEP "field order" issued the same day and in a report dated Feb. 8 and sent to Bernard Lindstrom, the PWSA executive director.

The DEP, in a written response to questions from the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, said Wednesday that its ongoing investigation is looking at whether water quality or public health was put at risk due to the chemical change. It said it had not found any evidence of that to date.

In April 2014, the DEP cited the water authority for switching corrosion inhibitors used in the water treatment process, from soda ash to caustic soda, without approval. In January 2015, the PWSA went back to using the soda ash treatment specified in its state permit, and the state found no water quality impact due to the temporary change.

The DEP is responsible for making sure public water systems meet federal and state clean drinking water standards. But it has delegated oversight of the PWSA and 35 other community water systems in the county to the Allegheny County Health Department, which conducts federally required "sanitary surveys" every three years and less extensive annual "cursory surveys."

[Read more: PWSA says water leak releasing 10,000 gallons a minute as search for rupture narrows]

Jim Kelly, deputy director of the health department, said there are rough parallels between the two unauthorized chemical substitutions.

“In 2014, PWSA was permitted to use one chemical and the other was listed as a secondary option in the permit, but DEP was supposed to be informed before a switch,” Mr. Kelly said. “In the situation last month, PWSA has a permit to install a new liquid lime feed system but hadn’t done it yet.”

Will Pickering, a PWSA spokesman, declined to comment Wednesday night.

The DEP field order Jan. 6 was the first of three it issued last month. On Jan. 24, DEP issued a field order alleging that PWSA had failed to “effectively operate and maintain public water system facilities” at its operation in Highland Park. That order requested flow diagrams, including customer locations near the reservoir and filtration plant, and focused on turbidity readings, chlorine levels and contact times, the same focus as the Jan. 31 boil-water order.

Mr. Kelly said the health department was not informed that the state was reviewing operations at the Aspinwall and Highland Park facilities until DEP issued its boil-water order, which lasted for almost two days and required the placement of temporary water tanks in the eastern and central parts of the city.

“We did not know the DEP was at the facility, and don’t know the questions it asked or how it found the [low] chlorine levels it found,” Mr. Kelly said. “When we talked to the [DEP] regional administrator, she instructed the inspectors to contact us, but they didn’t. They haven’t completely shared with us.”

He said the DEP finally called the health department after the boil-water order was issued, and has since apologized for the “oversight.” The failure to communicate may be the result of a lack of clearly defined roles and reporting requirements.

“We need an agreement, and we’ve been asking for a memorandum of understanding for a while,” Mr. Kelly said.

Better communications with the health department’s experienced inspectors might have allowed the DEP to avoid having to issue the boil-water order, said Robin Shaw, the health department’s supervisor of inspectors in the water management program.


“From an inspector’s point of view, we have a lot of experience with the PWSA and maybe understand how the system works.

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PWSA pinpoints origin of major water main break

BOB BAUDER  (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Thursday, Feb. 16, 2017, 12:20 p.m.

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority Thursday found a water main break that is draining 10,000 gallons per minute from the authority's largest reservoir, and crews worked to repair it on Parker Street in Etna.

PWSA found the break in a 60-inch, 4-mile long pipe connecting the Aspinwall water works to the Lanpher Reservoir, which is in Shaler.

The authority had been searching for the leak since Wednesday because water levels in the Lanpher and Highland Park No. 2 reservoirs began dropping significantly.

Crews were unable to immediately find the leak because it was draining into a large sewer and stream that runs into the Allegheny River.

Lanpher has a 133-million-gallon capacity and provides water to about 45,000 North Side residents.

The leak did not disrupt water supply or quality. PWSA said the repair is not expected to impact service.

PWSA is pumping water to the North Side from Highland Park. Mayor Bill Peduto said the city brought in tanks containing "tens of thousands of gallons of water" to provide residents with fresh water as a precaution. The tanks were not needed.

"The reservoir level is going back up," Peduto said. "The quality has not been affected. The pressure has not been affected. It's only the level in the reservoir."

PWSA has experienced multiple problems in recent weeks, including a boil water order caused by fluctuating chlorine levels in one of the main reservoirs feeding the East End. About 100,000 residents last week were forced to boil water or seek an alternative source of water for almost two days.

Pittsburgh Controller Michael Lamb on Thursday released an audit of the authority. He said auditors identified PWSA's biggest problem as a lack of consistent leadership and long-range plans for improvements.

The authority since 2014 has had four different executive directors and a fifth who was hired but withdrew after questions surfaced about his termination from a similar position in South Carolina.

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PWSA locates major water leak, begins repairs

February 16, 2017 12:56 PM

By Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority said today that it has located a major leak of a 60-inch water main that caused the release 10,000 gallons per minute overnight.

The authority had been investigating the leak overnight after water levels fell at two reservoirs. The leaking main connects the Aspinwall treatment plant to the Lanpher reservoir in Shaler, which serves about 45,000 residents north of the Allegheny River.

The leakage amounts to about 20 percent of the agency's total average daily water production, PWSA said.

"Flow from the leak was previously undetected because it is flowing into a large sewer and a stream that discharges into the Allegheny River," PWSA said this morning.

In a statement issued Wednesday night, PWSA said there was "no risk to water quality or supply."

PWSA crews and contractors have begun excavating the site to make repairs. The authority said that the repairs should not affect customers.

Earlier Wednesday, PWSA reported difficulty maintaining water levels at both the Lanpher reservoir and the Highland No. 2 reservoir in Highland Park. Crews identified the area of the leak in part by closing valves on three water mains beneath the Allegheny River.

[Read more: Before boil orders, PWSA made unauthorized changes in water-treatment chemicals]

PWSA also has mobilized "additional pumps [overnight] to ensure adequate water pressure and supply," the authority said in a written update at 10 p.m. Wednesday.

Spokesman Will Pickering said Wednesday night that he didn't have an immediate sense of how much water had been lost. He said the authority spotted a problem Tuesday afternoon.

The difficulty emerged roughly two weeks after PWSA put some 100,000 customers under a flush-and-boil advisory for about two days. Late last week, a temporary failure at a PWSA pump station led to water-

pressure problems in eastern city neighborhoods.

City Controller Michael Lamb's office recently completed a performance audit of the authority. That review was due to be released Thursday. Pennsylvania Auditor General Eugene DePasquale has signaled that his office, too, will look into PWSA after the authority board last week invited scrutiny from the state.

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First Published February 15, 2017 2:58 PM

Pittsburgh auditors found problems 'everywhere we turned' at PWSA

BOB BAUDER [✉](https://twitter.com/BobBauder) (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Thursday, Feb. 16, 2017, 2:38 p.m.



Andrew Russell | Tribune-Review

Workers from PWSA work to repair a 12-inch Water Main on the 1300 block of Pennsylvania in Manchester, Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2017.

Frequent changes in top officials and a lack of long-range improvement plans are the biggest problems at the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, Pittsburgh's controller said Thursday.

Controller Michael Lamb released findings of a draft performance audit that scrutinized PWSA operations from 2014 to 2016 and noted 53 problems ranging from revolving-door management to poor customer service and dysfunctional billing.

Lamb was joined by Pennsylvania Auditor General Eugene DePasquale, who announced the beginning of an audit requested by Mayor Bill Peduto's administration. DePasquale said his team would examine PWSA governance, board oversight and staffing.

The authority, which was working to repair a major water leak Thursday morning, could not immediately be reached for comment.

"It seemed like everywhere we turned at PWSA, there was a problem," Lamb said. "Since we started this audit, we went through four different directors down there. When you don't have consistent, competent leadership, you have a problem."

Lamb noted that the authority hired Boston-based Veolia North American as manager to improve its performance and included incentive clauses in its contract that paid the company millions of dollars. The management contract ended in 2015.

PWSA has filed a lawsuit against Veolia seeking up to \$12 million in damages, claiming it "grossly mismanaged PWSA's operations."

Lamb said Veolia eliminated three full-time jobs at a secondary treatment plant at the Highland Park No. 1 reservoir that was at the center of last week's boil water order for 100,000 city residents caused by low chlorine readings.

"When those alarms go off that chlorine is low, it has to be responded to," Lamb said.

Auditors also cited PWSA for billing errors that wrongly charged some customers thousands of dollars and caused delays in billing lasting as long as a year.

Lamb said customers still are experiencing long telephone waits because of poor customer service, a longtime criticism at the authority.

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Pittsburgh controller: PWSA audit finds problems 'at every turn'

February 16, 2017 10:48 PM

By Adam Smeltz and Don Hopey / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

A revolving door of management has left the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority without long-term improvement plans, even as the agency faces profound infrastructure failures, city Controller Michael Lamb warned Thursday.

In a year-long routine audit, the public watchdog said his staff ran into problems in PWSA "at every turn," ranging from poor customer service to lead contamination. The 75-page draft report offers 53 recommendations, including streamlined customer support and better promotion of in-home lead tests. *(See the full report below.)*

"When you don't have consistent, competent leadership, you have a problem. And even when you have competent leadership but it's not consistent, you can have a problem," Mr. Lamb said during a Downtown press conference. He said PWSA counted four different directors since the performance audit began in late 2015.

Mr. Lamb said the authority's interim executive director, Bernard R. Lindstrom, impressed him after taking the job late last year. But he said the PWSA board did not appear to have been engaged fully in the authority's decision-making. The audit covered select operations from 2012 through 2016.

PWSA board Chairman Alex W. Thomson, who joined the panel in April 2014, would not comment beyond written statements Thursday, saying he had been unable to review the audit in detail. A statement he emailed to the Post-Gazette said that in his 25-year experience with nonprofit and for-profit boards, the PWSA governing body is "the most engaged, committed, knowledgeable and cooperative group of individuals that I have worked with."

He also said PWSA leaders were reviewing the audit and would "implement all appropriate actions for improvement." The authority had yet to respond formally to Mr. Lamb's office.

"The findings aren't relatively new. We've heard them. But at the same time, it shows that there has been a systematic lack of long-range planning," Mayor Bill Peduto said. "And that only goes back to 2012. We can



At a news conference Thursday, state Auditor General Eugene DePasquale said his office's review would focus on PWSA governance. (Pam Panchak/Post-Gazette)

go back 20 years and show that there's never been long-range planning within this organization."

Normally, the controller's office does not release audit reports in draft form. Mr. Lamb said he wanted to make the information available to state Auditor General Eugene DePasquale, who announced Thursday his own audit of PWSA.

As part of relaying the material to Mr. DePasquale, Mr. Lamb said, he felt the information should be made public immediately. Mr. DePasquale also appeared at the press conference, indicating his office's review would focus on PWSA governance.

"This gives us a lot of supplemental and good background information," Mr. DePasquale said. Mr. Thomson said PWSA leaders would collaborate with Mr. DePasquale "to identify additional areas where PWSA can improve its governance and performance."

Mr. Lamb's review began months before the latest problems at PWSA. Crews identified Thursday a major water leak that was releasing an estimated 10,000 gallons a minute from a 60-inch main. Workers began excavating to make repairs on the line, which connects the Lanpher reservoir in Shaler with the Aspinwall treatment plant.

Late last week, a temporary failure at a PWSA pump station led to water-pressure problems in eastern city neighborhoods. And about two weeks ago, PWSA put some 100,000 customers under a flush-and-boil advisory for roughly two days.

That crisis helped lead City Council to ask both state Attorney General Josh Shapiro and Mr. DePasquale to look into the authority. PWSA board members have since backed the request, and the Peduto administration plans to empanel an advisory group to re-evaluate the authority's structure.

Meanwhile, PWSA is working to restore service at the microfiltration plant for the Highland Park Reservoir No. 1, spokesman Will Pickering said. Lower-than-usual chlorine levels in water leaving the uncovered reservoir led to the boil advisory. The chemical additive serves as a backup to the microfiltration.

The authority is “considering what it would take to permanently remove Highland 1 from the water system,” Mr. Pickering said in a statement. “We do not believe it poses a contamination risk, but it is comparably expensive to operate, and it is not needed for storage.

“Eliminating an uncovered reservoir also gives PWSA more options for treatment chemicals,” Mr. Pickering said. He added that preserving the popular recreation site as a public landmark at North Highland Avenue “could be an option.”

The idea surprised Highland Park architect David Hance. He helped fight to keep the reservoir uncovered in the 1990s.

“That’s just such a change of tune all of a sudden from saying that reservoir was a central, essential component of the city water supply,” Mr. Hance said. “Ten years ago, that was not the situation.”

[Read more: Privatizing Pittsburgh's water system is not a good idea, officials say]

Mr. Hance, who is president of the Highland Park Community Development Corp., said the reservoir’s usefulness in the water supply system may have changed, but that it’s still an important community asset.

“The park was designed around the reservoir, and it continues to be a primary reason to go to the park. It remains a regional amenity,” he said. “If they keep water flowing through it, that would be promising. But as a citizen and a ratepayer, I don’t understand how they can take it out of the supply system.”

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Privatizing Pittsburgh's water system is not a good idea, officials say

February 17, 2017 12:00 AM

By Don Hohey / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Despite his scathing draft audit of the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority's water-supply operation and management, City Controller Michael Lamb still sees much to like about the publicly owned system and said recent talk about selling it is a bad idea.

Mr. Lamb, speaking at a news conference Thursday where he released a draft audit containing 53 deficiency findings, said that despite its problems, the city's water system remains a valuable asset. Thoughts of privatization, he said, are "wrong-headed."

"That's just not the right answer," said Mr. Lamb, who noted that the structure of the authority's almost \$1 billion debt likely makes it unmarketable anyway.

"There is not a private partner who would pay the city real value for the system," he said. "It's got lots of problems but it's a phenomenal system."

The PWSA was established in 1984 to oversee \$200 million in water system capital improvements. It took over operation of the city's water system in 1995 and sewers in 1999.

Mr. Lamb said ratepayers likely would be shortchanged if a private water supplier -- he mentioned Pennsylvania American Water as a suitor -- were to buy the system. He said that not only would the nation's largest private for-profit water supplier acquire the city system's physical assets, it would gain territory that would allow it to be well positioned to expand into North Hills communities.

"The value they would get for what they would pay would be so significant," Mr. Lamb said, "It's an idea that shouldn't be part of the mix."

State Auditor General Eugene DePasquale, who attended the Lamb news conference and is about to start a PWSA performance audit of his own, said he's also wary of going the privatization route.

"It should be very clear that if you support privatization, it should be done at a minimum with tremendous caution," Mr. DePasquale said. "Because if you do move in that direction, you don't get it back."

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More water woes: A big leak, DEP finding and bad audit for PWSA

February 17, 2017 12:00 AM

By the Editorial Board

Leave it to the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority to prove the maxim that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. For the second time in less than three years, the state Department of Environmental Protection has rapped the PWSA for using certain treatment chemicals without permission.

But that wasn't the least of the perennially ineffectual agency's woes Thursday. It also was repairing a leak draining an estimated 10,000 gallons of water from its system every minute, was under fire because of an unflattering audit by city Controller Michael Lamb and was bracing for an upcoming review by state Auditor General Eugene DePasquale, who pledged to put the agency "under a new magnifying glass."

It all gives new urgency to Mayor Bill Peduto's promise to set up a panel to chart the future of the PWSA, plagued by years of personnel, billing, flood-control and customer-service problems and criticized two weeks ago for a low-chlorine reading that forced 100,000 Pittsburghers to boil their water for about two days.

The PWSA also faces the monumental task of replacing lead pipes. An overhaul of the agency can't come fast enough. It could spring a new leak at any time.

In 2014, the DEP cited the PWSA for substituting one type of corrosion inhibitor for another without permission. The agency eventually resumed use of the original chemical, and the state concluded there had been no impact on drinking water quality.

Lesson learned? Not quite. According to a report Thursday by the Post-Gazette's Don Hopey, the DEP cited the agency again in January, this time for using coagulating agents that hadn't been approved for the agency's treatment process. State officials are still determining what impact, if any, the change had on water quality and public health. So far, there is no evidence of harm.

About 11 a.m. Thursday, the PWSA announced it had found the 10,000-gallon-a-minute leak — in a 60-inch line between a reservoir and a treatment plant — and was scrambling to repair it. At about the same time, Mr. Lamb released the draft version of a PWSA performance audit that he said found problems "at

every turn" between 2012 and last year. Many of the issues, such as leadership turnover, billing problems and the challenge of replacing lead pipes, were well known.

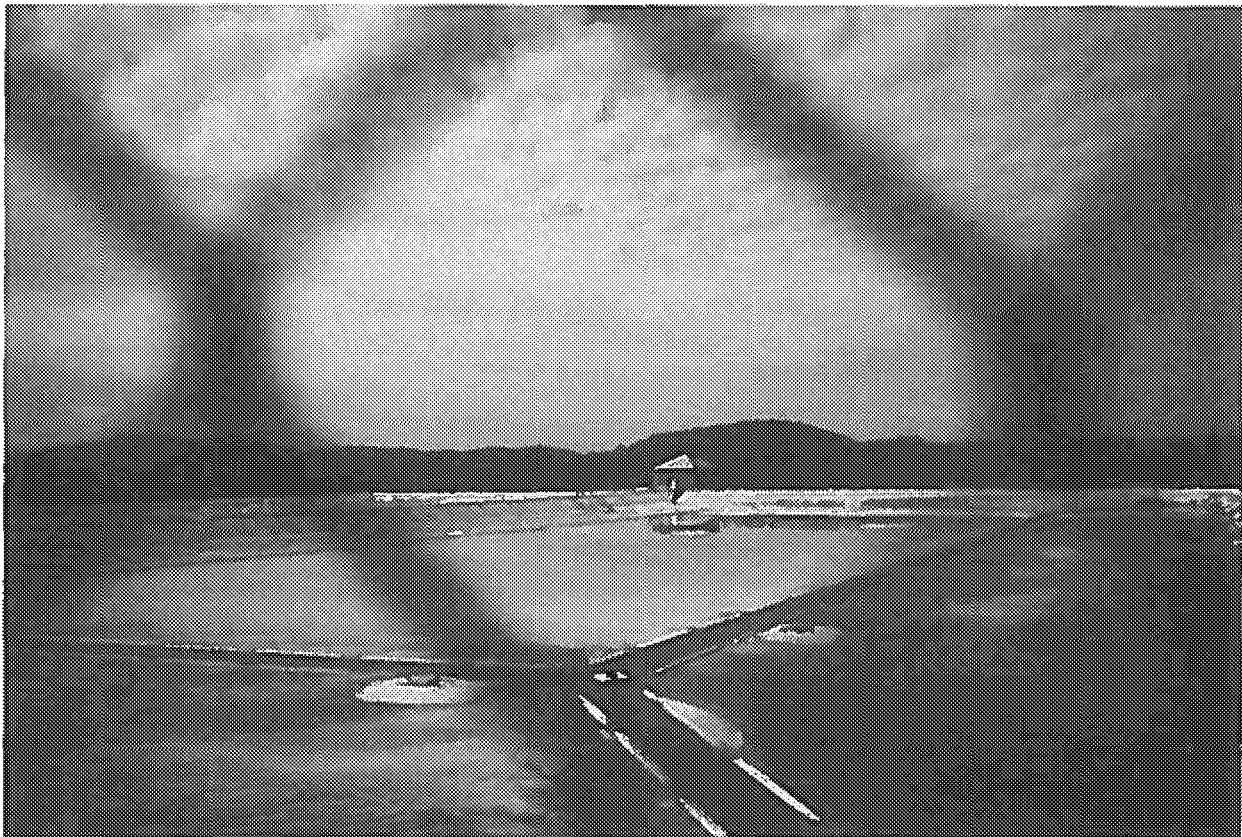
However, the audit provided new details, such as how poorly installed meters contributed to billing problems, and helpful recommendations, such as his proposal to streamline the automated phone-answering process so that customers reporting emergencies spend less time on hold. He also urged the agency to work with vendors to arrange special prices for consumers concerned about lead so they can install filters or have their homes' individual service lines replaced.

Mr. DePasquale, who attended a press conference with Mr. Lamb, said he was invited to review the PWSA's governance structure and decision-making by Mr. Peduto and the PWSA board.

The agency needs all the help it can get. As Mr. DePasquale pointed out, consumer confidence is at a low ebb.

PWSA to shut off water flowing to leaking water main

BOB BAUDER 🐦 (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Friday, Feb. 17, 2017, 12:06 p.m.



Andrew Russell | Tribune-Review

The Lanpher Reservoir in Etna, shown, Friday, Feb. 17, 2017.

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority on Monday plans to shut off water flowing through a section of a water main that is leaking 10,000 gallons per minute so crews can work to fix it.

The authority announced the plan Friday. It said the shutoff is not expected to cause any disruption of water service.

PWSA on Thursday found a break in a 60-inch, 4-mile long pipe connecting the Aspinwall water works to the Lanpher Reservoir, which is in Shaler.

The authority had been searching for the leak since Wednesday because water levels in the Lanpher and Highland Park No. 2 reservoirs began dropping significantly.

Lanpher has a 133-million-gallon capacity and provides water to about 45,000 North Side residents.

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A huge section of Pittsburgh was 24 hours from losing water service

BOB BAUDER  (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Friday, Feb. 17, 2017, 6:54 p.m.



Bob Bauder | Tribune-Review

Water from a ruptured Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority water main bubbles into a pit on Parker Street in Etna. A crew from Butler-based Frank J. Zottola Construction had been trying to find the break in a line feeding the North Side.

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority narrowly averted a disaster after a large water main burst Wednesday and began draining a reservoir that supplies water to the North Side, city officials said Friday.

Water feeding the Lanpher Reservoir, a 133 million-gallon pool in Shaler, was gushing from the rupture at a rate of 10,000 gallons per minute. The Lanpher water level was dropping by 1 inch every 90 minutes, according to PWSA.

It left PWSA about 24 hours to make repairs before roughly 45,000 North Side residents lost water pressure, Mayor Bill Peduto said.

"It was serious because you're losing 10,000 gallons per minute," Peduto said. "There were two things that had to happen: No. 1 we had to locate the leak, and No. 2 we had to create additional pumping in order to be able to get the reservoir back on track."

The water authority repaired a pump and valve assembly at the Aspinwall waterworks in the nick of time, Public Safety Director Wendell Hissrich said.

He said the city, as a precaution, brought in 45,000 gallons of drinking water in tanks to supply residents and an additional 17,000 gallons of water in case of fire. The water is being stored near the Waterworks Mall near Aspinwall in case it's needed.

Pittsburgh also notified Pittsburgh Public Schools and Allegheny General Hospital on the North Side about the potential of losing water service.

"Fortunately, everything worked out," Hissrich said. "They were able to start that pump and maintain the level in the reservoirs."

But PWSA is faced with repairing a major leak in a 60-inch pipe that runs four miles from Aspinwall to Lanpher Reservoir.

PWSA officials suspect the leak is somewhere along Parker Street in Etna near its intersection with Washington Street, but the agency has yet to determine the exact location.

PWSA spokesman Will Pickering said most of the water is draining into a large sewer line underneath Parker Street into Pine Creek and the Allegheny River.

Parker remains closed to through traffic indefinitely, according to Etna police.

A crew from Butler-based Frank J. Zottola Construction searching for the leak Friday dug a large pit in the street and water appeared to be bubbling up from the bottom and draining. Workers also uncovered the nearby concrete sewer pipe. The sound of rushing water was audible from a hole in the top of the pipe.

T.J. Johnson, Zottola's project manager, said he called off work until Monday over concerns that uncovering the leak would cause additional damage.

"We can't expose any more of the pipe because the line is still live," he said. "They're losing 10,000 gallons a minute. If you expose that there would be no way to control that water."

PWSA on Monday plans to shut off water flowing through the line so crews can work to repair it. The authority, which can supply Lanpher and the North Side from a reservoir in Highland Park, said the shutoff is not expected to cause disruption of water service.

The authority will have to make special arrangements to pump water to residents in the vicinity of the Waterworks Mall, Pickering said.

The work could take months, Peduto said.


The same line ruptured in 2014, and it took three months to repair, Pickering said, adding that PWSA wouldn't be able to estimate a timeframe for this repair until it locates the leak.

"Being able to replace it isn't something you can just do over the course of a couple weeks," the mayor said. "It's going to take probably a couple months."

Bob Bauder is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach him at 412-765-2312 or bbauder@tribweb.com (<mailto:bbauder@tribweb.com>).

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PWSA water line leak to take 2 months, \$400K to fix

BOB BAUDER  (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2017, 10:30 a.m.



Bob Bauder | Tribune-Review

Water from a ruptured Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority water main bubbles into a pit on Parker Street in Etna. A crew from Butler-based Frank J. Zottola Construction had been trying to find the break in a line feeding the North Side.

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority estimates it will take two months and \$400,000 to repair a deteriorated, century-old water main feeding a reservoir that supplies North

to repair a deteriorated, century-old water main feeding a reservoir that supplies North Side neighborhoods.

Workers from Butler-based Frank J. Zottola Construction will replace at least eight feet of the 60-inch diameter pipe, PWSA spokesman Will Pickering said. They began excavating on Tuesday.

"Our estimate is two months, but again that's subject to change," Pickering said. "We think we'll be able to pull it off in that time frame."

The main runs four miles from the PWSA water works in Aspinwall to the Lanpher Reservoir in Shaler. PWSA is providing water to North Side residents from a reservoir in Highland Park.

Contractors on Monday uncovered the leak that was draining 10,000 gallons per minute into a storm culvert running to the Allegheny River. Pickering said about eight feet of the pipe beneath Parker Street in Etna deteriorated because of age.

"Essentially, the bottom of the pipe fell out from that eight-foot section," he said.

PWSA will continue supplying about 45,000 North Side residents from the Highland Park reservoir and expects no service disruptions, Pickering said. Parker Street will be closed until the work is finished.

The authority last week discovered water draining from the 133-million-gallon Lanpher Reservoir. Workers could not pinpoint the problem until PWSA shut off water to the faulty pipe Monday.

Bob Bauder is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach him at 412-765-2312 or bbauder@tribweb.com (<mailto:bbauder@tribweb.com>).

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Fixing leaky PWSA line expected to cost \$400,000, could take two months

February 21, 2017 12:58 PM

By Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The leaky water main that had been losing some 10,000 gallons every minute has a break that's about 8 feet long, the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority said Tuesday.

PWSA confirmed that contractors found the break late Monday after excavating the 60-inch, century-old main in Etna. Repair work could take up to two months and will probably cost about \$400,000, according to PWSA estimates.

Excavation was continuing Tuesday afternoon as workers prepared to replace the broken segment of pipe, PWSA said. Crews are centered in Etna on Parker Street between Washington and Hill streets — an area that will remain restricted to local access during the repairs. The authority said the break is on the bottom of the main.

"We know it broke along seams," Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto said Tuesday. He called the repairs "a very big project" that would become more clear over the next couple of days.

"We want to make sure that we're not just sealing it and then letting another area break, but [that] we're fixing the problems with that line," Mr. Peduto said.

PWSA said customers should see no change in water service or quality during the work. The authority first detected a problem about a week ago, when water levels at two reservoirs were falling.

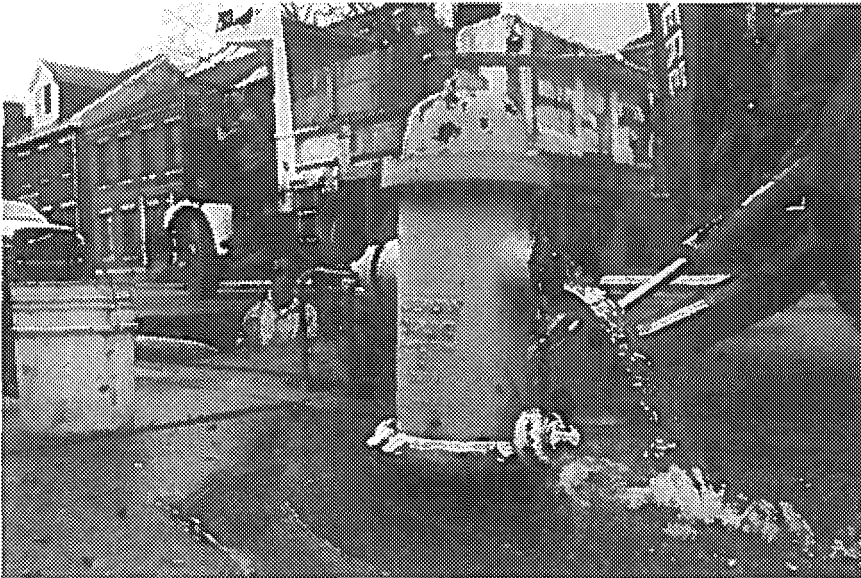
Workers have since halted the leakage, isolating the damaged section of the main connecting the Lanpher reservoir in Shaler with the treatment plant in Aspinwall. PWSA spokesman Will Pickering has said the pipe is "very brittle" because of its age.

Lanpher's service area includes about 45,000 residents north of the Allegheny River. PWSA has been relying temporarily on the Highland No. 2 reservoir in Highland Park to provide water service to that area.

Adam Smeltz: 412-263-2625, asmeltz@post-gazette.com, @asmeltz.

Pittsburgh's water system has so much debt, it's ripe for a takeover

NATASHA LINDSTROM <https://twitter.com/NewsNatasha> | Friday, Feb. 24, 2017, 12:48 p.m.



Andrew Russell / Tribune-Review

Workers from PWSA work to repair a 12-inch Water Main on the 1300 block of Pennsylvania in Manchester, Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2017.

Mayor Bill Peduto's pledge to restructure the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority by joining forces with a deep-pocketed partner reflects a systems nationwide, utility experts told the Tribune-Review.

The Peduto administration's goals echo a leaseback deal that pumped \$225 million into Allentown four years ago as well as parts of an agreed a transaction finalized last month, said Russell McIntosh, vice president of financial services for the Herbert, Rowland and Grubic Inc. civil en.

"These are really unusual times in terms of utility finance, operations, ownership and technologies," McIntosh said. "In a sector where there t

In the coming months, Peduto intends to negotiate a new model for the debt- and controversy-riddled PWSA by finding one or more private without outright owning it. Partners also should have interest in finding ways to grow revenue by expanding PWSA's drinking water delivery t

"We are not seeking a full privatization," said Peduto's chief of staff, Kevin Acklin, who traveled with aides to Harrisburg this month seeking st for is a partner who can share the risk and the rewards of the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority."

To find those partners, the city has asked teams with financial and legal expertise to devise strategies to improve PWSA's operations, custom of restructuring the authority and secure bids from potential partners who will invest in repairs and upgrades.

Proposals are due Friday.

In two to three months, the city plans to seek proposals from potential partners. Peduto aims to ink an agreement with a partner by the end

Critics leery of bringing in outsiders to resolve PWSA's woes — including Pittsburgh Controller Michael Lamb and Allegheny County Controlle

"The rates are going to go up and up, and the quality is going to go down," said Wagner, who suggested the city use Urban Redevelopment A high-risk debt to turn around the authority.

Acklin countered that with 50 cents of every ratepayer's dollar going toward debt, it's "the status quo that will result in skyrocketing water rat

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS

Peduto's ideas aren't new to Pittsburgh.

Former Mayor Luke Ravenstahl, a fellow Democrat, joined state Rep. Mike Turzai, a Bradford Woods Republican, in pushing for public-private. Between 2012 and 2015, then-private PWSA operator Veolia Inc. created a full-time position tasked with running a marketing campaign aimed to collaborate with other Western Pennsylvania water systems.

PWSA has several wholesale customers, including Fox Chapel, Reserve, Aspinwall, Hampton-Shaler and West View. Combined, they account for about 10 percent of PWSA's revenue, says Will Pickering. The authority has a roughly \$130 million annual operating budget, Pickering said.

Skeptics have questioned why attempts by Peduto would be more successful — and whether enough viable partners will materialize to achieve the goal of not only paying down the authority's ballooning debt — now topping \$750 million — but also to replace some private homeowners' investments in the utility market, however, appears ripe for Pittsburgh to strike a deal, McIntosh said.

"Whoever comes in will likely make some level of immediate payment to the city, but the physical assets remain the property of the current owner, which is one of financing."

SIMILAR VENTURES

John Brosious, deputy director of the Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association, said he has observed a trend of "all sizes of (water) system mergers."

"While they can come in and do all this investment, rates are going to increase because private companies are investor-owned," Brosious said.

In Allentown, the Lehigh County Authority — an independent, public authority established in 1966 — outbid private companies with a proposal to do so by borrowing \$308 million at "attractive bond rates" available to tax-exempt entities, Lehigh County Authority CEO Liesel Gross said.

The deal not only paid off about \$30 million in debt related to water systems but also took care of Allentown's broader \$160 million unfunded pension liability.

"Included in the leaseback agreement were controls on what could happen with rates, so you could only leverage the future revenues to a certain extent. The Authority to more than double its customer base, to 55,000 and grow from 39 employees in 2012 to 160 in 2016.

Also built into the contract were commitments to invest in infrastructure and make a \$500,000 annual payment to the city, Allentown Controller Glazier said the arrangement seems to be working well in its first few years. City officials regularly get reports and convene a sewer and water committee.

"We're in this relationship with the city," Gross said. "They still own the system and have a long-term interest in having it be well-maintained."

In Scranton, public officials sold their sewer system outright to Pennsylvania American Water Co. for \$195 million, with the proceeds to be split between the city and the company. Scranton maintained control and residual revenue from stormwater operations.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Penn American has no pending partnership offers before Pittsburgh officials — but the private company that already serves 26,000 customers in the city is looking to solve Pittsburgh's problems, spokesman Gary Lobaugh told the Trib.

"We are members of this community and understand how critical ongoing infrastructure upgrades and high-quality water and service are to making Pittsburgh one of the country's most livable cities," Lobaugh said.

PWSA's challenges go beyond finances.

The city controller joined state Auditor General Eugene DePasquale last week in announcing an audit had found problems "everywhere we go," citing leadership turnover and a lack of long-term improvement plans as major challenges.

PWSA Interim Executive Director Bernard L. Lindstrom, who took the helm in September, has described the authority as being at an "all-time low" in terms of capabilities.

In the past year, PWSA has grappled with multiple public relations crises, from overbilling customers to chlorine treatment deficiencies that exposed Pittsburgh's situation should not be compared to that in Flint, Mich., where many residents still hesitate to drink or bathe using tap water, as it does in Flint's lead-water crisis.

"Pittsburgh isn't there yet, but Pittsburgh is near a crisis situation," Edwards said. "It's refreshing to see that this problem is being taken seriously."

About PWSA

WATER

- 117 million-gallon-per-day rapid sand-type treatment plant, 1,000 miles of main and service lines, 25,000-plus valves, 7,450 fire hydrants, 11 million-gallon storage tanks.
- Serves more than 300,000 residential, commercial, industrial and public customers — about 84 percent of the city. A small section of customers is served by Water Co.
- Allegheny River is its source.

SEWER

- Four wastewater-pumping stations and 1,200 miles of sewer lines, which link to ALCOSAN's treatment plant.
- Serves almost all of Pittsburgh's residents, plus 24 suburban municipalities.
- Average age of service lines between 60 and 70 years old, with some dating to almost 150 years.

Alternative solutions

Pittsburgh isn't unique in its struggle to eradicate lead from drinking water and sewer systems. A look at steps public officials have taken else

- Philadelphia's water department provides residents zero-interest loans to replace lead service lines (<http://www.phila.gov/water/wu/drinkir> water mains, they offer to replace private service lines from the block's main line to the customer's water meter.
- Cleveland created an online tool (<http://www.clevelandwater.com/your-water/water-quality-and-treatment/lead-treatment>) so residents ca
- In Galesburg, Ill., municipal officials teamed with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to replace up to 2,000 private lines using a \$4 (<http://kwqc.com/2017/01/13/epa-okays-galesburg-water-lead-pipe-replacement-still-scheduled/>).
- Kalamazoo, Mich., has been replacing lead service lines since 1992 but plans to ramp up the pace to almost 500 a year to eradicate lead fro MLive reported (<http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2017/01/kalamazoo-sep-lead-sep-pipes.html>).
- New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo proposed last month (<http://www.syracuse.com/state/index.ssf/2017/01/ev-sep-cuomo-sep-seeks-sep-2b-sep-to-sep-fix-sep-some-sep-of-sep-nations-s> a broad funding package to pump \$20 billion into New York's ailing sewage and water systems, which reportedly require more than \$80 billic

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Raw sewage leak bedevils residents of an Overbrook street in Pittsburgh

BOB BAUDER [✈](https://twitter.com/BobBauder) (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Friday, Feb. 24, 2017, 5:00 p.m.



Guy Wathen | Tribune-Review

Homehurst Avenue in Overbrook on Saturday, April 9, 2016.

Raw sewage is flowing on an Overbrook street and residents say the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority is ignoring repeated requests to unclog a leaking line.

The Allegheny County Health Department on Wednesday declared the situation on Homehurst Avenue a public health hazard and ordered PWSA to make repairs immediately. It also gave the authority 10 days to submit written plans for repairing and maintaining the sewer line.

Residents said sewage was still flowing on Friday.

"We have a disaster going on over here and nobody's doing anything," said Natalie Leon, 70, who lives on Homehurst. "This has been going on for three weeks. Sewage is running all through the street. The school children who walk to the bus have to walk through it."

Bernard Lindstrom, PWSA's interim executive director, declined comment when asked if the authority would comply with the health department order.

Pittsburgh City Councilwoman Natalia Rudiak of Carrick, who represents Overbrook, said failure to repair the line is an "example of PWSA shirking its public responsibility."

"There's sewage in the street," she said. "It's a public health hazard."

Residents have been battling with PWSA since October 2014 over the line that the authority contends is private and the responsibility of homeowners to maintain. The health department in December ruled during a hearing that the line is public and is PWSA's responsibility.

Lindstrom said PWSA intends to install a new line. In a Feb. 16 letter sent to 13 Homehurst residents, he estimated the cost at \$574,000 and said homeowners would be required to contribute \$7,227 apiece or face liens on their properties.

Leon said the homeowners have rejected the proposal because the sewer line is owned by the city.

"They want to charge us a tap-in fee, and they can't do that because we are a public line," she said. "They cannot assess us anything."

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Repairing leaky 60-inch water main will cost PWSA much more than expected

BOB BAUDER  (<https://twitter.com/BobBauder>) | Friday, Feb. 24, 2017, 4:45 p.m.



Bob Bauder | Tribune-Review

Water from a ruptured Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority water main bubbles into a pit on Parker Street in Etna. A crew from Butler-based Frank J. Zottola Construction had been trying to find the break in a line feeding the North Side.

Repairing a leaky 60-inch water main feeding Pittsburgh's largest reservoir will cost the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority more than four times its original estimate, officials said Friday.

PWSA's board of directors voted unanimously to approve spending up to \$1.7 million on repairs to the main that runs about four miles from the water works in Aspinwall to Lanpher Reservoir in Shaler. It supplies about 45,000 North Side residents.

PWSA earlier this week estimated repair costs at \$400,000.

Bernard Lindstrom, PWSA's interim executive director, said the authority originally thought the problem was a single hole in the pipe running under Parker Street in Etna. Engineers have since determined that an eight-foot section of the century-old pipe deteriorated. PWSA must replace the entire section and repair a 48-inch storm sewer line running next to the pipe, according to an authority engineer.

"If we would have found just one little, small hole... and we just had to excavate that certain section, \$400,000 was probably a good estimate," Lindstrom said. "What was provided to you today was an engineering-based estimate of actual costs of what it's going to take to repair that line."

PWSA is supplying water to the North Side from a reservoir in Highland Park. It estimates it will take Butler-based Frank J. Zottola construction at least two months to repair the break.

Lindstrom said the authority has long-range plans to install a new 60-inch main to Lanpher. He could not provide a timeline for when that might happen. Costs could run as high as \$20 million, according to PWSA board Chairman Alex Thomson.

Authority crews discovered the break Feb. 16 after noticing 10,000 gallons per minute draining from the 133 million gallon reservoir. Water was running from the water pipe into the storm sewer emptying into the Allegheny River. It took workers several days to locate the underground leak. The line has since been shut off for repairs.

The problem caused no disruption of water service to the North Side, but Pittsburgh brought in more than 40,000 gallons of drinking water as a precaution at a cost of \$48,410, according to PWSA.

The leaking line was the latest problem to befall the troubled authority, which issued a boil water order in January because of low-chlorine levels in one of its other major reservoirs in Highland Park. PWSA is working to maintain consistent chlorine levels in Highland Park No. 1 reservoir, which remains out of commission, according to Lindstrom. PWSA has also been criticized for a billing mess, resulting in customers not being billed for more than a year, and high lead levels in water. It is surveying the city in an attempt to pinpoint lead sources, but has said most of the problem is in lines running to homes from PWSA water mains. Homeowners are responsible for a portion of the lines on their properties.

The board approved spending about \$525,000 to purchase lead testing kits for residents. It also approved paying Canada-based Cogsdale Inc. \$1.5 million to upgrade outdated computer software to handle billing.

Residents and representatives of eight environmental activist groups, which have united to form "Our Water Campaign," urged PWSA to improve water quality and reject potential privatization of the authority.

Mayor Bill Peduto has suggested a private company could help the authority by buying excess water and marketing it.

The authority is capable of producing 107 million gallons of water per day and is permitted to draw 100 million gallons per day from the Allegheny River. It can store up to 480 million gallons in its system of reservoirs and tanks. Customers use about 70 million gallons per day on average.

"Water can never be a commodity. It is a right," said the Rev. Vincent Kolb, pastor of Sixth Presbyterian Church in Squirrel Hill. "All the citizens of this community deserve access to clean water. It is our water together, not private property."

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PWSA: Repair work stemming from broken water main could reach \$1.7 million

February 25, 2017 12:03 AM

By Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Repairs stemming from a ruptured water main in Etna could cost up to \$1.7 million, officials with the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority said Friday.

Contractors identified Monday an 8-foot break in the 60-inch pipe, which serves the city's North Side. PWSA said Tuesday that a fix would probably cost about \$400,000.

That estimate would have covered mending only a straightforward hole, not the complications and system weaknesses discovered through ongoing exploration, said Bernard Lindstrom, PWSA's interim executive director. The century-old pipe connects the Lanpher reservoir in Shaler with a treatment plant in Aspinwall.

"This pipe has experienced these breaks in the past. We are all very, extremely concerned not only about the condition of those but what we're asking our aged infrastructure to do," PWSA engineering consultant Kathy Chavara said at a well-attended authority board meeting. Board members approved spending up to \$1.7 million on the work.

Ms. Chavara said the effort could take two months or more. She said PWSA is looking to replace the broken segment and strengthen others nearby, although the scope of the matter remains under review. She called the line "very brittle."

Additional obstacles include a storm drain that needs attention after the rupture, along with a 36-inch pipe that runs above the main, Ms. Chavara said. That infrastructure sits within about 40 feet of the break.

PWSA estimated the leak last week at 10,000 gallons a minute before workers isolated and stopped the flow. Butler-based Frank J. Zottola Construction Inc. is handling much of the work, with contractors centered on Parker Street between Washington and Hill streets in Etna.

Late last year, the PWSA board prioritized building a new main between Lanpher and the treatment plant, listing the project among seven crucial improvements. The existing main, which runs about four miles,

also burst in 2014.

An engineering study has yet to establish a formal timeline or cost estimate for the new line, PWSA board Chairman Alex Thomson said. He projected that the expense might reach \$10 million to \$15 million.

In the meantime, PWSA has said North Side customers should see no change in water quality or service while the existing main undergoes repairs. The authority is routing water to the Lanpher service area from the Highland No. 2 reservoir in Highland Park.

More than 70 people attended the monthly board meeting — a relatively large turnout that included nearly a dozen activists and residents who addressed members. Some cautioned against privatization as Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto's administration explores how best to structure the authority.

Mr. Peduto's office has said full privatization is not on the table, although it wants a "financial and operations partner." His administration said it would empanel an advisory group after a boil-and-flush alert affected some 100,000 PWSA customers this month.

"We need to expand public control, not expand for-profit control," said Kim Dinh, 23, a volunteer with the nonprofit Thomas Merton Center in Garfield.

Others urged PWSA to supply customers with free lead filters while the authority works to reduce levels of the metal. Allegheny County Controller Chelsa Wagner pressed that argument Friday through a representative.

Mr. Thomson said PWSA is exploring options and could offer filters — or filter vouchers — to customers who are most vulnerable "from a socioeconomic standpoint." He cautioned that in-home lead filtration devices can be hazardous if they're not maintained.

"I think absolutely it's something we've got to do, but we've got to do it right," Mr. Thomson said.

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First Published February 24, 2017 2:02 PM

Councilwoman: Pittsburgh households with young kids should receive lead filters

February 28, 2017 5:33 PM

By Adam Smeltz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Local officials should offer lead-filtering water pitchers — at no charge — to some 25,000 Pittsburgh households with children under the age of 6, a Pittsburgh City Council member said Tuesday.

“What we should do today is protect our most vulnerable citizens, and those are our kids,” Councilwoman Deborah Gross said in a Downtown news conference.

Estimating the endeavor might cost about \$500,000, Ms. Gross said she will encourage council, the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority and other agencies and leaders to help finance the effort. She wants to see a fundraising campaign take shape in the next month, with money in place by the summer, she said.

Mayor Bill Peduto’s office supports the push, said Kevin Acklin, his chief of staff. Ms. Gross also serves on the PWSA board.

The authority estimates that 20 percent to 25 percent of 85,000 PWSA service connections contain lead, which is tied to brain damage and other ailments. State environmental authorities ordered last summer that PWSA begin to inventory and replace its lead service lines after tests found elevated levels of the metal in some homes.

Identifying which properties have the lead service connections could take a couple of years.

“We must do everything we can do to reduce the public’s exposure to lead,” said state Sen. Wayne Fontana, D-Brookline, who joined the news conference. He is co-sponsoring legislation that would require annual lead testing in schools and publication of the results.

In an analysis released Tuesday, Pennsylvania received an “F” for what critics called policy shortfalls in preventing lead in school drinking water. The PennEnvironment Research and Policy Center issued the rating, and Ms. Gross said she would like to see extra fundraising for lead filters in Pittsburgh Public Schools.

The school board is open to discussing that idea, said Moira Kaleida, the board's second vice president. Each school already has at least one or two water fountains with lead filtration, board President Regina B. Holley said.

Meanwhile, PWSA is exploring how it might assist underprivileged customers to secure in-home lead filters, board Chairman Alex Thomson has said. Under its state order, PWSA must replace at least 7 percent of its lead service lines every year.

The work must continue until compliance tests show a sustained reduction in lead levels.

Planned changes to the water additives that control pipe corrosion should foster that decline, according to PWSA.

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