

Sent: Monday, February 02, 2004 2:12 PM

Subject: EXCESSIVE CONCENTRATIONS OF LEAD NOT LIMITED TO OUR NATION'S CAPITOL

Dear Aquathin Dealer OnLine, **with special attention to Lomax Water Purification Services in D.C.**, Splash NewsBulletin and Allergic Reaction NewsBulletin Members;

Need another reason to own an Aquathin !? Over the years we've talked about the main fact that often notification of water concerns and contamination arrive to your doorstep long after the exposure. Here is a classic case right in our own nation's capitol. Steve Lomax, my friend and Authorized Aquathin Dealer for almost 12 years, and I have known about the prevalence of lead at hundreds of parts per billion over the MCL, for almost as long. You have several test analysis in your Master Catalogue. There are thousands of LeadOut Filters in government and other public buildings. This problem exists wherever there are older structures that most often contain leaded piping....and its the world over.

But there is another issue below that often goes unnoticed concerning just how long it will take to rectify. Hence this issue is the known exposure until we personally take action to protect our families.

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Warmest regards to all...as well, your comments are always welcome and very much appreciated.

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Council Furious With Water Agency

Delayed Report of High Lead Levels Prompts Calls for

Review

By David Nakamura and Neely Tucker
Washington Post Staff Writers
Sunday, February 1, 2004; Page C01

Several D.C. Council members said yesterday that they were outraged that District leaders were not informed about lead contamination in thousands of city homes and called for an immediate review of the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority's performance.

The city officials said they were not aware that tap water in 4,075 homes had tested above the federal limit for lead until they read about the tests in yesterday's Washington Post. WASA, which first learned of lead contamination problems in 2002, should have been more diligent in informing the public and answering questions, they said.

"I'm furious about the fact we did not know about this," said Carol Schwartz (R-At Large), head of the council's Committee on Public Works and the Environment, which oversees aspects of the semi-independent water and sewer agency.

"The only way you can solve a problem is to know that there is one," said council Chairman Linda W. Cropp (D-At Large). "If you don't know there is a problem, what can you do? The city leadership ought to know. . . . We need to have hearings and work out a solution."

Schwartz's committee has scheduled its annual performance review for WASA on Feb. 10, but Schwartz said she will try to schedule an emergency hearing this week.

"I want to find out what they know, when they knew it and what they're going to do about it," she said.

Tony Bullock, spokesman for Mayor Anthony A. Williams (D), said yesterday that the administration probably will ask WASA and the D.C. Department of Health for a briefing this week. "We'll take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the integrity of the health of that supply system," Bullock said. "The sampling results are alarming, and we are going to get fully engaged in this matter at the earliest opportunity."

Ellen K. Silbergeld, a professor of environmental health sciences at Johns Hopkins University's School of Public Health in Baltimore, said yesterday that the lead levels in the District are "very, very worrisome." There are high risks, she said, "for pregnant women, those who are nursing and infants. Using water for drinking, formula or even preparing food should be avoided."

Studies have shown that children who ingest lead from water, paint or dust are at greater risk because their gastrointestinal tracts are more likely to absorb the lead and their developing neurological systems are more vulnerable to damage.

Silbergeld recommended that worried residents test the water first before seeking medical exams, saying low levels of lead in children do not produce noticeable symptoms. She also said lead exposure in adults can lead to increased risk of dying from cardiovascular diseases.

The discovery of lead in tap water has caused concern among residents in many D.C. neighborhoods because the city has 23,000 lead service lines that run through all four quadrants.

Eric Pierotti, who runs the plumbing department at Frager's Hardware on Capitol Hill, said the store received many calls yesterday from people who wanted to take precautions. He said callers were inquiring about "water testing kits and filtration systems that cover everything from one tap to the entire house."

WASA officials said they are uncertain why the levels of lead have spiked above the Environmental Protection Agency's lead limit of 15 parts per billion.

Random water testing in about 50 homes flagged the lead contamination in 2002. The EPA has specific guidelines that cities must follow when lead in water exceeds the limit, including informing residents of the risks associated with lead and replacing 7 percent of lead service lines annually.

WASA officials said that in October 2002, they mailed an 11-page brochure about the dangers of lead to every customer in the city. On Page 10, one paragraph noted that during WASA's "last sampling program in the summer of 2001 and June 2002, some . . . homes tested above 15 ppb." That was the only indication in the brochure that a problem had been discovered.

The agency then began replacing 7 percent of its lead service lines each year and undertook a much larger sample -- of more than 6,000 homes -- last summer. That's when widespread problems were discovered.

Glenn S. Gerstell, chairman of WASA's 11-member board of directors, said that WASA had mailed a letter to all 13 D.C. Council members last February noting that initial tests had found that the water exceeded the EPA's lead limit. He acknowledged, however, that the agency did not send follow-up letters after the larger sampling was done last summer. WASA also did not hold a news conference to discuss its findings.

"Could we be more aggressive reaching out? Maybe so," Gerstell said. "That's something the board should look at. We're always eager to improve operations. But I want to negate any suggestion whatsoever we are attempting to minimize or downplay or sweep this under the rug."

Any news conference, Gerstell said, "would have been an unsatisfactory news conference. We did not know what [the contamination] was due to scientifically or where it was coming from or how many homes were involved. We need more tests. A news conference would have raised a lot of questions and provided no answers at that time."

Council member Adrian M. Fenty (D-Ward 4) disagreed. "There's no sense of urgency with these guys," Fenty said. "WASA needs to be more accountable."

Jim Graham (D-Ward 1) was one of the few council members who recalled hearing about the lead contamination last summer. He said he was contacted by several constituents who were notified by WASA that their water had high lead levels.

WASA officials met with him at his office, Graham said, and reluctantly agreed to replace lead service lines on one street in his ward.

"We had to hammer them to get this action," Graham said. "It wasn't something where they came in and said, 'Sure, no problem.' It was a very tough conversation. It wasn't easy."

Tom Bryant, whose home in Northwest Washington tested as having high lead levels in the water, attended a community meeting in November at which WASA and D.C. Department of Health officials answered questions.

"They were very forthcoming at that meeting," Bryant said. "They made a big effort. They had three or four people there, and they made a big slide presentation."

But his neighbor, Nancy Lensen-Tomasson, whose water also showed high lead levels, said WASA officials told her they did not plan to replace any lead service lines on her block this year.

"Not enough information has been given out," she said yesterday.

Rebecca Epstein, who lives in American University Park and also has high lead levels in the water, said she fears for the health of her 5-month-old son. But when she told neighbors of the lead in her water, she said, "No one was aware of the problems."

WASA held a public meeting in December at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library to discuss the lead problems. But its notice of the meeting, which ran on its Web site and in community newspapers, did not state that lead had been found in tap water.

Georgetown resident Charles Eason, **whose water tested 36 times the EPA's lead limit**, said that he attended the meeting and that only one other resident was there.

"We're often disappointed at the turnout," said Johnnie Hemphill, WASA's spokesman. "We took the appropriate approach at the time. It's not the case that we were simply being reactive."

WASA said those with concerns should call the WASA hotline at 202-787-2732.

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