



Notice to PUC Water Customers

Conversion to Free Chlorine Disinfection

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) will be changing the method of providing disinfection in the city's water distribution system by converting to free chlorine residual during the week of October 17, 2011.

Currently chloramine (a combination of chlorine and ammonia) is used to provide a persistent disinfectant in the distribution system that controls growth of bacteria. PUC will switch to free chlorine as the method of providing this disinfectant residual in the distribution system.

The use of chlorine and ammonia was started back when the source of surface water supply was in the St. Mary's River at the locks, downstream of industrial operations. Given source water quality at that time the combination of the two chemicals for disinfection, which was the only treatment given to the water, was considered to be appropriate. However, since construction of the Gros Cap Intake in 1986 the surface water source has been from Lake Superior and the water now passes through a number of treatment processes before reaching the distribution system.

Most drinking water systems in Canada and the USA use free chlorine as the distribution system disinfectant residual. Switching to free chlorine will, in addition to avoiding significant future construction and operating costs, eliminate the use of ammonia, which can present an operational hazard for PUC employees. It will also reduce corrosion in lead service pipes and brass plumbing fixtures that contain some lead.

Activities required to carry out the conversion to free chlorine are tentatively scheduled to start Monday, October 17, 2011 and to continue through the week. It is anticipated that, provided all activities proceed as planned, the conversion should be complete by Thursday, October 20th.

Consumers may notice a change in taste and/or odour during the system flushing that is required to change over all the water in the pipes from chloramine to free chlorine. As the transition in water chemistry moves through the distribution pipes, changes in taste or odour may be experienced by some people. Consumers that notice a change and find the taste or odour disagreeable should flush their house plumbing for approximately 5-10 minutes. Should the problem persist for more than one day, please call PUC at 705-759-6522 Monday through Friday from 9:00 to 16:30 or 705-759-6555 at all other times.

The city's drinking water will remain safe to consume throughout the conversion process.

PUC is working closely with Algoma Public Health officials and the local Ministry of Environment to plan and carry out this work. Regular ongoing monitoring of drinking water quality will continue throughout the process and status updates will be issued each day to advise the general public of progress.