

IN THE PIPE



NEWSLETTER

Spring/Summer 2016

No. 14

The Quality of Your Drinking Water: What You Need to Know

Following the discovery of high lead levels in the water supply of Flint, Michigan, citizens across the nation are raising questions about the purity of water being delivered to their own faucets.

At WCSA, water quality is a daily focus. Our operations team works very hard to source, filter and deliver safe drinking water to more than 21,000 customers in our region. As awareness of this important issue grows, we want to answer questions, share essential information, and provide steps our customers can take to reduce concerns regarding lead exposure.

Lead is a naturally occurring mineral that is found throughout our environment. It is produced and distributed through the burning of fossil fuels, mining and manufacturing, and is widely used in products such as batteries, paint and ammunition. It is also found in building materials, such as solder, flux, pipes and plumbing fixtures.

WCSA's source waters were tested for a variety of constituents before they were selected. It is very rare for lead to be present in source waters. Thankfully, we have never detected lead in our source water.



WCSA's Middle Fork Drinking Water Plant

It is important, though, to understand that water can sometimes dissolve lead out of pipes, plumbing and fixtures into household water streams, potentially delivering a higher mineral content to household taps. This is referred to as leaching. Leaching occurs when water with high acidity levels or low mineral content reacts with metal, causing excessive deterioration in piping and infrastructure. This is what we are seeing in Flint, where water sources are corrosive in nature.



Our sources here in Southwest Virginia are generally not corrosive, and we work to ensure they remain that way. However, it is wise to be aware of the kinds of materials used in the construction of your home.

Some houses, particularly those built between 1983 and 1986, may contain pipe, solder, flux and fixtures manufactured with a higher lead content. The most common types of fixtures that contribute to leaching include brass- or chrome-plated faucets and fixtures with lead solder, particularly those exposed to hot water.

The Virginia Department of Health requires WCSA to identify these mid-1980s homes and regularly test their in-house lead levels. We are aware of 58

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WCSA Project Updates

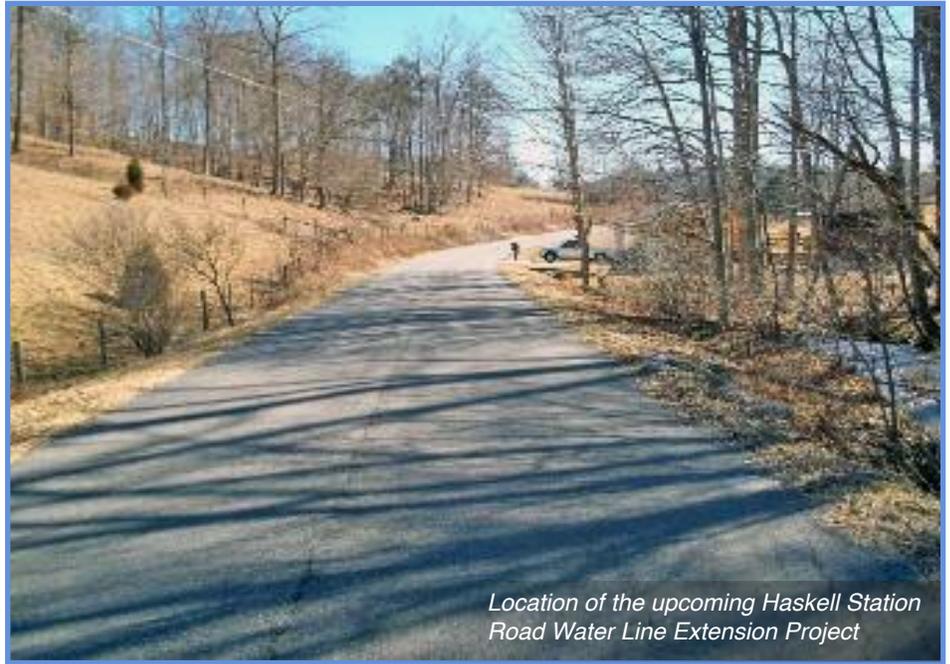
To learn more about WCSA projects, visit www.wcsawater.com.

Ongoing Projects:

The **Galvanized Water Line Replacement — Phase 2 Project** is the second step in a three-phase project to replace all galvanized pipe in WCSA's distribution system over the next several years. The first four divisions of Phase 2 were recently completed. A fifth division is expected to begin construction in the summer of 2016 and be completed by the winter of 2016-2017.



The **Childress Hollow Road Water Line Extension Project** will extend water service along Childress Hollow Road from Spring Valley Road to Black Hollow Road. The project will consist of an estimated 9,600 linear feet of new water line and provide water service to approximately 12 residential connections. Construction began in February and should be completed by the summer of 2016.



Upcoming Projects:

The **Exit 13 Phase 2A Sewer Project**, located off I-81 at Exit 13, is the second step in a multi-phase project to extend wastewater treatment service to the Lee Highway area of Exit 13. Phase 2A will consist of installation of a sewer main from Spring Creek Road to the Virginia Highlands Airport, as well as some branch lines or laterals to provide

service for customers who are not directly adjacent to the Oak Park Sewer Project. Construction is expected to begin this summer and continue through the winter of 2016-2017.

The **Route 58 Corridor Water System Improvements Project** will include improvements for the water system serving the town of Damascus, Alvarado and areas east of South Holston Lake. Installation of a new water storage area tank will begin this summer and continue until early 2017.

The **Mill Creek Water Treatment Plant Improvements Project** will provide a new membrane filtration system and additional repairs, replacements and upgrades to the water treatment plant. Construction is expected to begin in late summer 2016 and continue until the end of 2017.

The **Haskell Station Road Water Line Extension Project** will replace and install approximately 4,700 linear feet of new water line. The project is currently in the design stages and is expected to advertise for bids by late summer 2016. 💧



Extra Eyes are a Big Advantage When Searching for Line Breaks and Leaks

If you've ever experienced a broken pipe during a spring thaw, you know what a challenge it can be to find, and fix, a line break on your own property. Now imagine tracking more than 900 miles of piping across a mountainous region, and you'll have an idea of the job of the WCSA operators who monitor the county's Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system.

WCSA's drinking water plant operators keep an eye on the system 24/7, noting supply and pressure in multiple lines and tanks. Sensors throughout the system constantly refresh the data, providing a real-time overview of water flow across the county.



Doug Sullins, Middle Fork Drinking Water Plant operator, monitors WCSA's Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system.

"It's a big job," says Mellissa Elswick, a senior operator at the Middle Fork Drinking Water Plant who's been with WCSA for more than 22 years. "Not only do we have to produce good clean water, we have to get it to people. With SCADA, you can see trends in water levels, and if you see a tank dropping at 2 a.m. when nobody's up washing, you know there's something going on."

With enough pressure on a line, a break can be dramatic, sending a cascade of water into the air. More often, though, the only evidence is water surfacing to trickle downhill or pool in a low spot. When that happens, Elswick says, it helps to have a few extra sets of eyes on the ground. "A lot of times, the community will help us by spotting flowing water where there usually isn't a stream, or noticing puddles when it hasn't rained in a few days," she says.

Normal wear and tear can sometimes cause a break or leak, but they occur more often with the coming of cold



Large water line break

weather, says Gary Thomas, Middle Fork plant operator. "On a daily basis, we monitor 19 tanks and 25 valves through SCADA," he says. "Breaks occur when you have cold weather and then the ground thaws out, or sometimes contractors can accidentally get into lines that are near the ones they are replacing. If

residents have their water go out, they will call us, but other times, someone else will see the leak and locate it for us."

Elswick recalls one incident where an area farmer stepped in to help. "We had an instance where a tank was dropping like crazy. We were pumping as quickly as we could to it, and it was still losing ground. If a tank gets down to a certain point, we lose pressure, so we had crews out working hard to try and find the problem. A farmer located near Emory called and told us, 'Your lines run through my pasture, and there's a lot of water standing up here.' Sure enough, that's where the break was. Since we're not in the habit of jumping fences, without his help, we wouldn't have found it anytime soon."



Small water line break

WCSA customers who see unusual ponding or notice a sharp drop in pressure can contact the customer service department at 276-628-7151 for information or to report a leak. To report a leak after normal business hours, call 276-628-7151 and choose option one. 💧

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such homes among our 21,000-connection customer base. Of these, 30 were evaluated in 2015. None had lead levels greater than the recommended action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb), and of those tested, 80 percent were below the detection level of 2 ppb. In other words, 100 percent of these homes passed the test! This is good news for everyone in our service area.

If you live in a home that was built between 1983 and 1986, but have not been contacted regarding routine testing, please let us know. If your home should be included on this list, we will test your water at no charge. Additional customers

who want their water checked for lead may contact us, and we will be glad to help coordinate a test. A lead sampling kit and certified lab testing costs approximately \$40.

WCSA is committed to providing safe, clean water for all our customers. We summarize our regular water testing results in our annual Consumer Confidence Report. This is mailed to customers each year and can also be accessed on our website. For additional questions on this topic, please visit our website FAQs or contact us at 276-628-7151. We'll be glad to work with you to address your concerns. 💧

WCSA Receives Gold Award

For the sixth consecutive year, WCSA has been awarded the highest possible ranking in operations and performance excellence for water utilities by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH).

WCSA received a 2015 Excellence in Waterworks/Operations Performance Award following a 12-month analysis of data by the VDH Office of Drinking Water. Each year, the VDH recognizes drinking water plants that perform above and beyond minimum standards, optimizing their treatment process, and running it efficiently and effectively.

The Middle Fork Drinking Water Plant was one of 21 water treatment plants in Virginia to earn a perfect score of 20 in the judging criteria. Of the 131 conventional filtration plants evaluated, WCSA was among 31 that received a gold award, while 51 received silver and bronze awards.

“WCSA has the largest permitted capacity and serves the largest number of service connections in the Mt. Rogers



Planning District, and has consistently been a top performer in the Virginia Optimization Program,” says Eric R. Herold, PE, VDH district engineer for the Mt. Rogers Planning District. “Of the 11 conventional surface water plants in our district, WCSA’s Middle Fork Drinking Water Plant was one of seven plants to receive a perfect performance score of 20 for 2015 operations, and one of eight plants to receive a gold award.” 💧



WCSA Calendar

WCSA offices will be closed on the following holidays:

Memorial Day **May 30**

Independence Day **July 4**



Board Meetings

UPCOMING BOARD MEETING DATES

May 23, 2016

June 27, 2016

July 25, 2016

Board meetings are held at WCSA in the E.W. Potts Board Room at 6 p.m. The public is welcome to attend.

Actual dates may vary. Please contact our office to confirm meeting schedule.

REMINDER

**AVOID THE TIME AND
EXPENSE OF MAILING
AND POSTAGE WITH
WCSA'S AUTO-DRAFT,
ONLINE BILLPAY
OR 24/7 PAY BY PHONE.**

**CALL OUR
CUSTOMER SERVICE
DEPARTMENT AT
276-628-7151 FOR
DETAILS.**

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