



CITY OF RUTLAND
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
RUTLAND, VERMONT

City Hall – 52 Washington St. – Rutland, VT 05701
Mailing Address: P. O. Box 969 – Rutland, VT 05702
Phone: 802-773-1813 Fax: 802-775-3947

Bob Protivansky
Commissioner of Public Works

Tom Garofano
Water Treatment Manager

PUBLIC NOTICE

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER

Levels of HAA5 Above Drinking Water Standards

Dear Water Consumer:

You will find this notice is very similar to previous notices you have received. We are required by the State to provide such a quarterly notice whenever there is an exceedance of a water quality standard. As before, our water system, in certain locations, continues to exceed drinking water standards for a regulated contaminant, HAA5 or haloacetic acids, and similar notices will likely be continued as we work towards a correction. **This is not a health emergency or a “do not drink” notice.** The information below should provide additional information and answer many questions.

The City is proud of its well-managed and protected drinking water system. Despite this HAA5 challenge, your drinking water quality is excellent and routinely passes tests for over 150 potential contaminants. Your water filtration facility is recognized by regulators and other water professionals for its excellence both in operation and performance. Haloacetic acids, as explained below, are a common byproduct of disinfection with chlorine, particularly when surface source waters such as a stream or lake are the water source. The existence of HAA5 compounds has existed since water systems were disinfected with chlorine in the early 1900's, but the regulation of them is relatively recent. The City is planning to reduce this contaminant by changing the way the City disinfects its drinking water. That process may take several years as the most effective solution is identified and put in place. In the meantime, the City will continue to sample the water distribution system, more extensively than that required by the State, to better understand the nature of the formation of these compounds. This data may also be helpful to other communities, and to the regulatory bodies.

Please read this informational newsletter to learn more about this subject and contact the Department of Public Works with any questions.

WHAT DOES THE CITY TEST FOR IN OUR DRINKING WATER?

As required by State and Federal regulations, the City routinely tests for over 150 potential contaminants, both naturally occurring and man-made. These include hundreds of bacteriological tests, tests for inorganic compounds and metals such as lead and copper, volatile organic compounds, synthetic organic compounds (including herbicides and pesticides), per and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), nitrate, radionuclides and compounds referred to as Disinfection

Byproducts (DBP's). All tests have shown these 150+ potential contaminants to be either non-detectable or below regulated drinking water standards, **except for Total Haloacetic Acids (HAA5).**

The regulatory maximum contaminant level (MCL) for HAA5 is 60 parts per billion (ppb or µg/l). As of the fourth quarter, 2024, four locations on the City water distribution system are required for quarterly average testing, listed below. One location (Gleason Road) tested above the 60 µg/l limit shown as a locational annual average. All results are as follows:

57 µg/l on Greens Hill Lane, 61 µg/l on Gleason Road, 59 µg/l on South Main St, and 57 µg/l on Spruce St.

WHAT ARE HALOACETIC ACIDS?

Haloacetic Acids in drinking water are compounds formed when naturally occurring organic matter (dissolved plant material, etc.) combines with a strong oxidizing agent such as chlorine. Such dissolved organic compounds exist in all surface water and can increase with heavy rain events, easily erodible soils in the watershed, etc. The City manages the water from Mendon Brook very carefully, having the ability to shut off the water intake during high flow periods. However, despite the brook water being crystal clear in appearance, dissolved compounds still exist. Of interest is, after Tropical Storm Irene, the level of haloacetic acids went down significantly, since the brook was scoured of most vegetation. Since then, it has gradually increased to pre-storm levels.

Following the 1909 typhoid epidemic, the City began adding chlorine to its system, which essentially eliminated water borne illnesses. In 1995, the City constructed a water filtration facility. This facility not only removes bacteria and pathogens but also removes approximately 25% of the dissolved organic compounds contributing to the formation of HAA5 compounds. Chlorine, in the form of sodium hypochlorite, is added, following filtration, to maintain the large distribution system in a bacteria-free condition. However, chlorine, when combined with trace organic matter, create numerous compounds collectively known as disinfection byproducts (DBPs). Federal and State regulations require public water systems to test for two "families" of these compounds, Trihalomethanes (TTHM's) and Haloacetic Acids (HAA5's). The City has always maintained TTHM concentrations below the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL), but has exceeded the standard for HAA5's at the four official State testing locations referenced above.

ARE THERE HEALTH CONCERNS RELATED TO HAA5's?

This is not an emergency. Drinking water containing HAA5's, at this concentration, will not lead to any adverse short-term effects. The MCL set by EPA is intended to protect against potential lifetime exposure health effects. The EPA and CDC indicate that chronic lifetime exposure to certain DBP's may increase the risk of cancer to a small percentage of the population.

Some people who drink water containing haloacetic acids in excess of the MCL over many years may have an increased risk of getting cancer. In animal studies, some haloacetic acids have been associated with reproductive or developmental effects. For those who wish more detail, there are studies available on the internet done by the Department of Health and Human Services' National Toxicology Program. See [RoC Profile: Haloacetic Acids; 15th RoC 2021 \(nih.gov\)](#) and [Human Exposure - Report on Carcinogens Monograph on Haloacetic Acids Found as Water Disinfection By-Products - NCBI Bookshelf \(nih.gov\)](#), as well as several relevant data and information sheets by the CDC and EPA.

ARE DISINFECTION BYPRODUCTS NEW IN PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS?

No. Just about any water system which uses surface water as a source (such as a lake, river or brook) and also disinfects with an oxidizing agent (such as chlorine) will create DBP's. These compounds have been common in public drinking water (and in much higher concentrations) since the early 1900's when chlorine disinfection was introduced. Filtration of surface water sources, now required for most all surface water supplies for removal of biologic contamination, reduces the dissolved natural organic matter, which, in turn, reduces the creation of DBP's. Rutland's very effective slow sand water filtration facility reduces this precursor material, thus reducing potential DBP's. However, the City does exceed the HAA5 standard at one of the required monitoring locations.

WHAT IS THE CITY DOING TO LOWER THE HAA5 CONCENTRATION?

The City takes any exceedance of water quality standards seriously. We are actively working on addressing this issue and are coordinating with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation. The City had an engineering study done several years ago which examined options to reduce the level of DBP's. In addition, the City has received a technical assistance grant from EPA to further study changes in operation and/or facility additions which will address this issue. This is not an uncommon problem nationally (74% of the US population receives drinking water from surface water supplies) and the alternative solutions are well known.

Potential alternatives are: 1) changing the type of disinfection from sodium hypochlorite to monochloramine (a less reactive form of chlorine, used by dozens of large communities nationwide including Vermont's largest water system, Champlain Water District), 2) adding granulated activated carbon filtration to the treatment process, or 3) adding an ion-exchange filtration process. Preliminary costs for these range from less than \$1M (option #1) to over \$10M (options #2 and #3), with proportional increased operating costs.

Very recently a study published in Science Magazine identified a disinfection byproduct of potential concern from the use of monochloramine. While it is not known if this compound is harmful to humans, or at what concentration, or if it might occur in Rutland's water, we are following this development, as is the State. It may be many years before any definitive information is available. In the meantime, we are looking at alternative possibilities to lower the HAA5 levels while still using the current method of disinfection. This will require time, pilot testing and coordination with the State. Ultimately, the City will need to move ahead with the most beneficial and effective solution to solve the existing regulatory violation.

CAN I USE A HOME FILTER TO REDUCE DBP'S?

Home filters can reduce DBP's if properly installed and maintained. There are various types of home water filters, including reverse osmosis and granulated activated carbon which are effective. However, the City does not advocate that home filters are necessary. Consumers who choose to add a home filter are advised to check on the product's effectiveness for this purpose and carefully follow the manufacture's recommended operation and maintenance procedures. Massachusetts DEP has an on-line resource for home filters at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/home-water-treatment-devices-point-of-entry-and-point-of-use-drinking-water-treatment>

WHERE CAN I GET ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

You can contact the Department of Public Works at 802-773-1813 or at PO Box 969, Rutland, VT 05701 with any questions. Regarding your personal health concerns, we recommend contacting your personal health care provider.

WATER FILTRATION FACILITY



FILTERED WATER STORAGE TANKS – 5 MILLION GALLONS



Please share this information with all the people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.