

Energy and Environment Cabinet Creates Group to Keep Lead Out of Kentucky's Drinking Water

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FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 29, 2016) – Kentucky's public water systems consistently provide high quality water to the public in compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act. Today, the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet, Division of Water, has announced that it has proactively created a workgroup whose main goal will be to prevent lead from entering the state's drinking water.

Thirteen experts from a broad spectrum of Kentucky's water infrastructure have agreed to join this effort. The group, which began its work last week, will review existing protocols, lead/copper rules, service line replacement programs and compliance monitoring activities, as well as all public education and outreach to customers. The group will develop a report and present recommendations to the Division of Water.

"Following the events at Flint and elsewhere, we determined to look at what we are doing at the Division of Water and at public water systems in Kentucky and whether our protocols and procedures would avert similar issues here and whether there are areas for improvement," said Pete Goodmann, director of the Division of Water. "I am very pleased that the individuals on this workgroup are willing to take this on."

The work group is chaired by Greg Heitzman, P.E., with Blue Water Kentucky, and formerly of the Louisville Water Co. and Louisville Metropolitan Sewer District.

In addition to Heitzman, other members include: Gary Larimore, Executive Director of the Kentucky Rural Water Association (KRWA); Kay Sanborn, P.E., Executive Director of the KY/TN Section of the American Water Works Association (AWWA); Tom Gabbard, Assistant Director of the Division of Water; Ron Lovan, P.E., of the Northern Kentucky Water District and the Association of Municipal Water Agencies; Thomas Rockaway, PhD, of the University of Louisville, Civil Engineering Department; Brad Montgomery, P.E., of GRW Consultants, Louisville; Mike Gardner, P.E., of Bowling Green Municipal Utilities; Bill Robertson, P.E., of Paducah Water Works; Obe Cox, of Carroll County Water District #1; Brian Thomas, of the Marion Water Department; Rengao Song, PhD, of the Louisville Water Co.; and Jennifer Burt, Public Safety Branch of the Kentucky Department of Public Health.

Energy and Environment Cabinet Secretary Charles G. Snively said the group will advance the cabinet's understanding of the issue and help develop additional safeguards. "We place a lot of importance on keeping Kentuckians healthy and free from lead contamination in our water supply," he said.

Public water systems supply more than 95 percent of the drinking water to Kentuckians. Water quality data submitted to the Division of Water from Kentucky's water supplies indicate that lead levels in Kentucky's drinking water are consistently within ranges considered safe by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Over the past four years, the 409 Kentucky public water systems subject to the federal Lead and Copper Rule have collected, tested and reported approximately 10,380 water samples for lead at households and businesses. More than 77 percent of these samples had no lead detected, while approximately one percent of these samples exceeded the action level of 15 parts per billion established by EPA in the Lead and Copper Rule.

The three systems that exceeded the federally established action level for lead at a frequency requiring action took the appropriate actions to notify the public, conduct additional and broader water quality monitoring at the treatment plant and in the distribution system, and developed and implemented a plan to reduce lead levels. All have returned to compliance.

Currently all of Kentucky's public water systems are in compliance with the federal drinking water standard for lead.