

Trihalomethane

Q: What are trihalomethanes (THMs)?

A class of organic compounds formed when chlorine reacts with naturally-occurring organic matter found in source water.

Q: What is the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) standard for THMs?

80 parts per billion (ppb).

Q: How often does DMWW test for THMs and what level is detected?

Each quarter, eight samples are obtained from sites in our distribution system. These samples are tested, analyzed, and averaged. Typically THM levels are in the 30 to 40 ppb range, well below EPA's maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 80 ppb.

Q: What does maximum contaminant level (MCL) mean?

Maximum contaminant level, or MCL, is the maximum amount of any contaminant allowed by the EPA.

Q: What are the health effects associated with high levels of THMs?

Some people who drink water containing THMs in excess of the MCL over many years may experience problems with their liver, kidneys, or central nervous system, and may have an increased risk of getting cancer.

Q: What treatment processes reduce the formation of THMs?

Reducing the amount of naturally-occurring organic matter in source water is the key to reducing the formation of THMs. At DMWW, this is achieved primarily in the presedimentation and lime softening process through the addition of a coagulant called ferric chloride. A coagulant causes particles in the water (organic matter) to clump together and settle out, which allows them to be easily removed.

For more information, call Des Moines Water Works at (515) 283-8700 or visit www.dmww.com.