

News and Updates from
Des Moines Water Works
MAY 2021

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Barely detectable levels of man-made chemical found in finished drinking water samples

DMWW confirms PFAS in water

Des Moines Water Works (DMWW) has recently confirmed barely detectable levels of PFOS (perfluorooctane sulfonate), a type of manufactured chemical that is a part of a larger group of compounds known as perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), in finished water.

“The levels are well below the Environmental Protection Agency’s Drinking Water Health Advisory,” Des Moines Water Works Chief Executive Officer and General Manager Ted Corrigan said. “It is important for our customers to know that the water they are drinking meets all drinking water standards, and that we are taking proactive actions to mitigate potential risks and be completely transparent about the data.”

In March 2019, the Air National Guard released a site inspection report related to PFAS concentrations at the Iowa National Guard base at Des Moines International Airport. PFAS is a category of man-made chemicals designed to resist heat, oil, stains and water in items such as Teflon, Gore-Tex and even pizza boxes and fast-food wrappers. It is also found in certain firefighting foam used at airports and on military installations. During production and use, it can migrate into soil, water and air. DMWW suspects the substance is entering the water supply from the Iowa National Guard site.

During sampling by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, PFAS compounds were found in the stormwater outfall leaving the guard site. This runoff enters Frink Creek, which flows through Water Works Park on its way to the Raccoon River.

DMWW has been proactively monitoring the levels of PFAS in the utility’s infiltration gallery system. The most recent results from early 2021 have revealed, for the first time, PFOS in finished drinking water at barely detectable levels.

Although well below the advisory level of 70 parts per trillion (ppt) at 6.5 ppt, these findings indicate more monitoring is critical and data collection will be ongoing to ensure the safety of finished drinking water, Corrigan said.

Des Moines Water Works has contacted the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), the Iowa Attorney General and Iowa’s Congressional delegation to inform them of the issue and to request federal funding and assistance in resolving the issue. To date, Iowa’s Congresspeople have been responsive to the requests and are reaching out to the Department of Defense for more information about when the local remedial investigation will commence for the Des Moines site.

DMWW, per IDNR recommendation, installed its own sampling wells to track the PFAS levels between Frink Creek and the infiltration gallery. Sample testing occurs quarterly, as well as during events such as a drought or flood to learn more about movement of the contamination.



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Water efficiency is a critical component of Des Moines Water Works' comprehensive strategy for meeting the water needs of a growing metropolitan region.

Pressure from degraded source water, drought conditions on the Raccoon River and projected peak demands this summer could combine to create difficulties to meet increased demand.

DMWW reminds all customers to use water wisely and practice responsible outdoor water use that includes following an irrigation schedule. To reduce the peak load on water utilities during summer months, customers are asked to voluntarily set their systems to avoid Mondays and water the other days based

on their odd or even address (ex: 1502 = even schedule).

The recommended outdoor irrigation schedule applies to all spray irrigation systems for businesses and homes:

- Watering is not recommended on Mondays
- Watering is not recommended between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.
- Even-numbered addresses: Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays
- Odd-numbered addresses: Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays

For more tips on wise water usage, go to www.dmww.com/education/using-water-wisely.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
EVEN		ODD	EVEN	ODD	EVEN	ODD

Water Works Park events return with COVID protocols

Larger events and outdoor gatherings will return to Des Moines Water Works Park with special requirements in place for COVID-19. To meet a mayoral proclamation, any event that has more than 30 people must have a safety plan in place.

Event organizers are required to generate a plan that includes specific guidelines depending upon the type of event:

- Race, run or walk
- Small performances, dances or dinners
- Recitals or similar small performances
- Lauridsen Amphitheater and Killinger Family Stage events - capacity for these venues is reduced to 5,000 at Lauridsen and Innovation Lawn; and 360 at Killinger and Hubbell Celebration Lawn.

Each plan must include information about

event management, seating, face coverings, signage, hygiene, restrooms, food and beverage, and other items. The larger the event, the more complex the plan will likely be.

A key component of larger events is pod seating with aisles to allow for physical distancing and to distribute the crowd. "Mosh-pit" or dense seating is prohibited.

The plan will be submitted to and approved by either DMWW staff or the Des Moines Water Works Park Foundation before the event is authorized. Events that also require a sound permit will have their plans approved by Des Moines city officials. Event organizers are responsible for enforcing their plan and must have a designated COVID manager who communicates with the Des Moines Water Works Park Foundation venue manager.

Des Moines Water Works understands this remains a difficult time for many customers.

We want to balance sensitivity to our customers' situations with sustaining utility operations. Customers who struggle to pay their bill can call DMWW at (515) 283-8700 to discuss payment options.

Payment arrangements are a collection assistance program that DMWW offers at all times to eligible customers. Customers must honor their commitment to pay or communicate when they are unable to do so in order to remain eligible for this assistance.

Another option for those whose financial situation has changed as a result of COVID-19 may be from IMPACT Community Action Partnership. IMPACT is administering rent and utility assistance through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) to residents of Polk County. Des Moines Water Works tenant customers must be able to demonstrate a COVID-related impact to their household income that has affected their ability to pay their utility bill and have a past due balance in order to qualify for this assistance. Payments through the program will be made directly to Des Moines Water Works and applied to the applicant's account. For more information about IMPACT, go to www.impactcap.org or call (515) 777-7644.

DMWW customers with delinquent balances should be aware their service could be terminated unless they have called and made arrangements.

DMWW customer service representatives look forward to working with you.

