

City of Des Plaines Water Quality

The recent water crisis in Flint, Michigan has led many people nationwide and here in Des Plaines to question if their own water is free from lead contamination and safe to drink. The information below is meant to help answer this and other questions about the City's water supply.

Where does our water come from?

Des Plaines' water comes from Lake Michigan via two sources: the City of Chicago (Jardine Water Purification Plant) and City of Evanston (Water Treatment Plant) by way of the Northwest Water Commission Pumping Station. After it arrives in Des Plaines, it is sent from pumping stations into our water distribution system which includes water mains throughout the community and elevated storage towers. Privately-owned service lines bring water from the mains into individual homes and businesses. The City is responsible for monitoring and maintaining the receiving water supply, water mains and storage towers; service lines are maintained by property owners.

How is the water treated?

Both the Jardine Water Purification Plant and the Evanston Water Treatment Plant extensively filter, chemically treat, and test water to make sure that it is free of contaminants before transmitting it to Des Plaines. When water arrives at the City's pumping stations it is tested again and given additional chlorine treatment, if necessary. In order to keep the water safe during transmission, Chicago and Evanston adds blended phosphate as part of the treatment process; this harmless chemical coats the insides of pipes and prevents water from coming into direct contact with the metal water main and service line material.

Is there lead in the water anywhere in the system?

Lead does not occur naturally in the water that the systems draws from Lake Michigan. Also, regular testing confirms that lead is not being introduced into drinking water during its transmission to residents and businesses through Des Plaines' water distribution system.

Lead may, however, enter your water supply from the private service line that connects to the water main. If you occupy an older home or building, then you may have a lead service line. Please note that even lead service lines are generally safe due to the layer of blended phosphate that coats the pipe interior. (The primary cause of the Flint water crisis was not lead service pipes, but the fact that the Flint River water was not treated with blended phosphates, causing the corrosive minerals within the river water to dissolve the protective coating inside the pipes. The result was corrosion of the lead service pipe material into the water supply). The primary danger of lead exposure in structures built prior to 1978 actually comes from lead paint, not from lead pipes.

If you have questions about drinking water quality, or about testing your water for lead, please contact the City of Des Plaines Public Works and Engineering Department at 847-391-5464.