

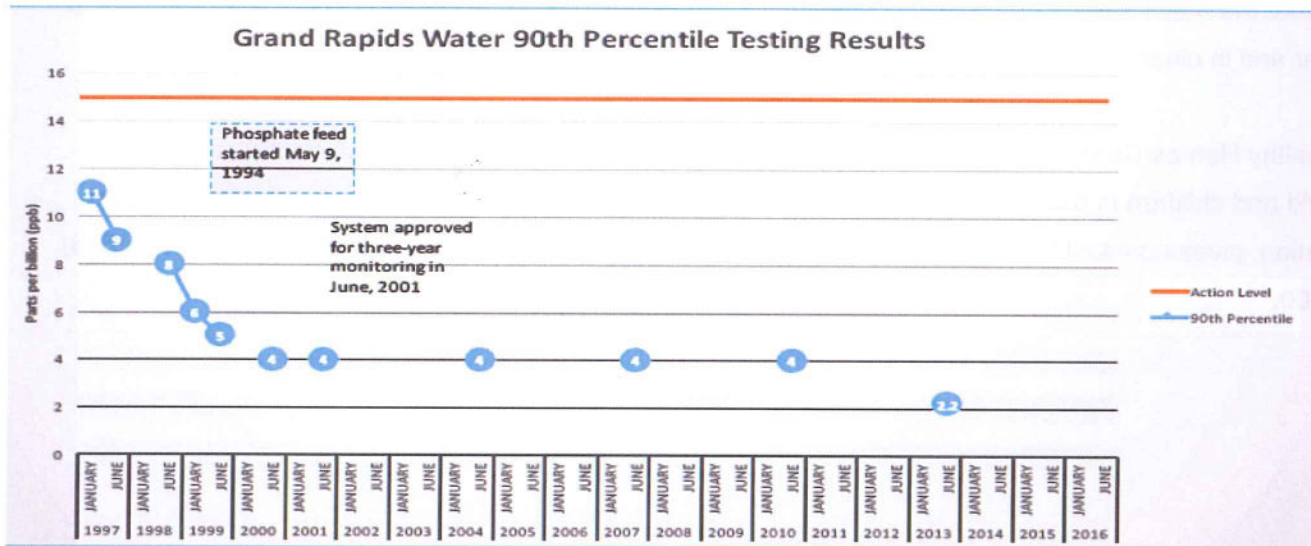


MEDIA RELEASE

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Grand Rapids Water System lead level at all time low



GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – Lead levels in drinking water provided by the Grand Rapids Water System have consistently improved over the last 20 years and are now holding steady. That fact is backed by 11 straight readings showing declining lead levels.

According to Joellen Thompson, water system manager at the Grand Rapids Water System, customers should be confident in the system’s safety and not compare what happened to the water in Flint to Grand Rapids’ system. She said as we know it, lead contamination began to affect Flint’s water because of two directly related items; 1) the water source changed (Lake Huron to the Flint River) and, 2) officials apparently did not add phosphates to the water and did not test the water quality prior to switching the source and supplying it to businesses and homes.

“What happened to Flint’s water supply would not happen here because we consistently operate and have utilized a safe and reliable water source -- Lake Michigan since the 1940s. Also, our team of water treatment professionals have added phosphates to our water since 1994 to reduce corrosion and coat and treat the lead pipes. We also test water samples for a variety of water quality parameters on an hourly, daily, weekly, monthly

and annual basis following strict local, state and federal standards,” said Eric DeLong, deputy city manager who oversees the City’s Enterprise Services Department and its water system.

“Our readings showing lead test results at 2.2 parts per billion in the 90th percentile are among the lowest in Michigan, the lowest in years here in Grand Rapids and tell a positive, reassuring story that should resonate with our customers,” he said.

In cases where customers are concerned about any concentration of lead in their drinking water, DeLong said the City will replace the city-owned portion of the service line and will help underwrite and finance the replacement of the customer’s portion of the service line into the home. However, he also notes that the data shows that the major source of the lead contamination is caused by lead-based paint chips, dust and tainted soil near and in older homes.

The Healthy Homes Coalition and the Kent County Health Department suggest that all children receiving Medicaid and children in older housing be tested for lead poisoning at one and two years of age. For more information, please contact the Health Department at (616) 632-7063 or the Health Homes Coalition at (616) 241-3300.

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