



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 9, 2019

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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT AND THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER MANAGEMENT
ANNOUNCE THE CITY WILL PAUSE WATER METER INSTALLATION**

*Drinking water remains safe and City encourages residents with water meters to opt
for free in-home water testing and free filters pending further study*

CHICAGO - Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, Randy Conner, Commissioner of the Department of Water Management, and Dr. Allison Arwady, Acting Commissioner of the Department of Public Health, today announced the City has paused the installation of water meters in homes with lead service lines after new data from an ongoing study found an increase in lead levels in a limited number of homes with water meters.

“The City of Chicago provides clean, safe drinking water that meets or exceeds EPA guidelines,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “To ensure that continues to be the case, I have directed the Water Department to stop installing water meters until further notice. Everything that we do as a city must be focused on the health and safety of residents, especially children. We are actively working to determine the cause of the increase seen in the latest data, and evaluating our options for reducing water lead levels in impacted homes.”

In 2016 the City commissioned the largest study ever to explore the possible impact of water main construction and meter installation on residential lead levels in single-family and two-flat homes.

Recent 2019 study data indicates that lead levels rose in 22 percent of homes with new water meters and 7.1 percent of homes increased above federal guidelines for drinking water. The vast majority of the 510 homes studied have either experienced no increase or a decrease in lead levels following the installation of a meter, however, the program is paused while the City identifies solutions and determines the cause of the increase.



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No one who lives at any of the addresses with elevated water lead levels in this study has been found to have an elevated blood lead level. CDPH automatically receives all human lead testing results from local doctors and laboratories.

“We want to reassure everyone that our drinking water is clean and safe. We are making this decision to ensure that our water continues to meet EPA standards,” said Conner.

Chicago water meets standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Illinois EPA, and the drinking water industry. There is no detectable lead in water when it leaves DWM’s treatment plants and travels through water mains. DWM tests water quality 24 hours a day seven days a week.

"In residences with water meters, and especially those with young children or women who are pregnant or may become pregnant, we definitely recommend having your water tested and using the free water filter," said Dr. Arwady. "We want to keep this issue in context. Lead-based paint remains the overwhelming cause of high blood lead levels in Chicago children."

Residents with meters in their homes are encouraged to take the following steps:

- Register for a free filter set—a water pitcher and six cartridges NSF-certified to remove lead—being offered to metered customers by the City. Registration information will be mailed in the coming weeks or call 311.
- Get their water tested by calling 311, or visiting www.chicagowaterquality.org to request a free test.
- Flush or run water continuously for five minutes after it has been stagnant for six hours or more. Flushing, which includes bathing, washing clothes and/or dishes, is an effective approach to lowering lead levels and exposure.

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