



ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

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JB PRITZKER, GOVERNOR

JOHN J. KIM, DIRECTOR

December 8, 2022

Debra Shore, Regional Administrator
United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
77 West Jackson Blvd
Chicago, IL 60604-35077


Dear Administrator Shore:

Thank you for your letter regarding ongoing efforts to reduce lead levels in drinking water within the City of Elgin (“City” or “Elgin”). The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (“IEPA”) recognizes the critical need for the City to take immediate steps toward reducing lead levels in its drinking water in order to protect public health, and appreciates the United States Environmental Protection Agency’s (“EPA”) recommendations toward that end. Given the City’s large population size, number of lead service lines, and recognized environmental justice concerns, IEPA is committed to using every tool within its authority to work with the City and EPA to protect public health and ensure safe drinking water for the Elgin community.

IEPA has worked proactively with the City for the last several years to address these lead issues. The water quality from each of the City’s two Water Treatment Plants has consistently met the established Water Quality Parameters that were developed following the Optimal Corrosion Control (“OCCT”) study completed in 1999 and revised in 2004. On October 4, 2019, IEPA required that the City create sequential lead sample profiles at locations with lead service lines to understand how lead concentrations in premise plumbing fluctuate beyond the first-draw samples. On June 8, 2021, upon review of the City’s lead sequential profile results, IEPA recommended that Elgin establish a voluntary lead sequential profiling program with consumer notification of high lead levels, and provide filters for homes with high lead levels based on those results. On July 23, 2021, Elgin agreed to develop a voluntary lead service line sampling program for residents with lead service lines and concerns of elevated lead in their drinking water, and to provide filters for homes with elevated lead levels.

Based upon these sample profile results, on March 5, 2020, IEPA required that Elgin submit a new OCCT study, water quality information, and treatment recommendation by July 30, 2021. After the City’s desktop corrosion control study concluded that additional demonstration studies were needed, the OCCT study and treatment recommendation deadline was extended to July 30, 2022. The City then began demonstration studies using harvested pipe from the City to perform a pipe loop study as well as coupon studies, and presented the results to IEPA on July 27, 2022. After meeting with EPA’s Office of Research and Development in early August 2022 regarding the need for additional time for the demonstration study and to evaluate impacts of potential changes to treatment processes, IEPA extended the due date for submission of the City’s OCCT and treatment recommendation to July 30, 2023.

IEPA issued a Lead Action Level Exceedance (“ALE”) to the City on January 14, 2022, based on its 90th percentile lead level of 22.5 micrograms per liter during the July through December

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2021 monitoring period. This ALE triggered Action Level Events and a Compliance Schedule (“Schedule”) wherein the IEPA required that the City take the following measures:

- distribute Public Education for Lead by March 1, 2022;
- submit to Illinois EPA a Lead Public Education Program Certification Form and a copy of the Public Education Program immediately after distribution to consumers;
- replace a total of seven percent (7%) of the City’s Lead Service Lines within twelve months of the end of the monitoring period in which the ALE occurred (December 31, 2022);
- continue to collect water quality samples from the distribution system;
- continue to collect water quality samples from each entry point into the distribution system from TP02;
- collect a lead/copper source water sample from each entry point into the distribution system;
- collect 100 lead/copper samples every six months until two consecutive rounds of monitoring are below the action levels and until the City has completed the required Corrosion Control Treatment steps;
- submit Source Water Samples to IEPA by March 1, 2022; submit a Source Water Treatment Recommendation to Illinois EPA by June 30, 2022;
- resume collection of Entry Point and Distribution Water Quality Samples (“WQP”); and
- submit the WQP Ranges Certification Form by January 10 and July 10, 2022.

The City was subsequently able to demonstrate compliance with the 90th percentile lead action level for the January through June 2022 six-month lead compliance monitoring period. During that compliance monitoring period, the City’s 90th percentile lead level was 14.2 micrograms per liter. With respect to the current July through December 2022 six-month lead compliance monitoring period, while the City still has until January 10, 2023 to report all sampling results, the 90th percentile lead level of samples collected to date is 21 micrograms per liter, which exceeds the lead action level. In accordance with the Illinois Environmental Protection Act and Illinois Pollution Control Board regulations, IEPA will be issuing an ALE and required Action Level Events and Compliance Schedule to the City for the July through December 2022 sampling period.

IEPA shares EPA’s concerns for public health and the safety of the drinking water provided to the Elgin community. Within five days of the date of this letter, IEPA will issue a letter to the City recommending that it immediately implement certain short-term measures to protect public health, including enhanced public outreach and education, enhanced lead in water testing, and enhanced water filter distribution. According to information provided by the City on November 4, 2022, the City has provided twenty-eight homes with filters upon request, in addition to 802 filters distributed to potentially disturbed lead service line sites.

IEPA will also urge the City to accelerate its lead service line replacement program. With the issuance of the Lead Action Level Exceedance on January 14, 2022, IEPA required the replacement of seven percent of the system’s lead service lines by January 1, 2023. IEPA

awarded \$4,000,000 to the City in 2022 for the replacement of 400 lead service lines with one hundred percent principal forgiveness. The City will receive another \$4,000,000 in early 2023 for the replacement of an additional 400 lead service lines. In addition to urging the City to accelerate lead service line replacement, IEPA will urge the City to accelerate completion of its OCCT study and implementation of the recommended treatment.

On December 1, 2022, IEPA requested that the Illinois Department of Public Health (“IDPH”) incorporate water sampling into lead exposure assessments related to individuals with reported elevated blood lead levels to assess the potential effects of lead in drinking water; and consider offering blood lead level testing at community events and for vulnerable populations in Elgin. IEPA has also requested that the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (“DCFS”) review available data regarding lead in drinking water exposure at Elgin schools and childcare facilities, and ensure any necessary mitigation actions are completed. The IEPA will continue to coordinate with IDPH and DCFS to assist in the implementation of response measures.

IEPA commits to promptly reviewing the City’s response to our forthcoming letter and will evaluate any further actions consistent with existing authority under the Illinois Environmental Protection Act and Illinois Pollution Control Board regulations. IEPA greatly appreciates the technical support and guidance provided by EPA, and will continue to utilize its primary enforcement authority under the Safe Drinking Water Act to work with EPA to ensure safe drinking water for the Elgin community. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you so much for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,



John J. Kim,

Director