



## CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL

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### NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release: 09/24/2020 5:00 p.m.

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT WRANGELL PUBLIC DRINKING WATER

Exceedence of the Allowable Maximum Contamination Level for the Disinfection Byproducts Haloacetic Acids (HAA5)

The City & Borough of Wrangell has been notified by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) that the Wrangell Public Water System (PWS# 120143) has surpassed an established drinking water standard with an exceedance of the allowable maximum contamination level for the disinfection byproducts Haloacetic Acids (HAA5).

As the operator of a public water system, the City & Borough of Wrangell routinely monitors for disinfection byproducts. Disinfection byproducts form when organic material is treated with chlorine disinfection. It is important that we use chlorine disinfection to treat the surface water we use as a water source because all surface water has microorganisms in it that can be harmful to your health if not adequately disinfected. However, a side effect of using chlorine disinfection is the formation of disinfection byproducts. EPA sets standards, allowable maximum contamination levels (MCLs), for these byproducts. The MCL for HAA5 is 60 parts per billion (ppb).

It is important to remember organic material is always present in the source water treated for Wrangell's drinking water. The organic material load changes throughout the year, typically starting to increase in the fall. This year Wrangell has experienced a higher than normal load of organic material, and earlier in the year than typical.

A review of our test results for the last sample results in August shows that our treated water exceeded the allowable maximum contaminant level (MCL) for these regulated disinfection byproducts. Compliance with the MCL is based on the locational running annual average (LRAA) of all samples collected during the last four calendar quarters. With the latest lab results, we currently have a **LRAA for HAA5 in our water system of 80.1 ppb**. The regulatory limit for HAA5 is set at 60 ppb.

**THIS IS NOT AN EMERGENCY.** If it had been an emergency, you would have been notified within 24 hours. However, the City & Borough of Wrangell think it is important you know this water quality standard is currently not being met and that the Environmental Protection Agency has indicated people who drink water containing HAA5 in excess of the maximum contaminant level over a period of several years may experience problems with their liver, kidneys, or central nervous system, and may have an increased risk of getting cancer. Therefore, it is important that we take steps to lower the disinfection byproduct levels in our source water whenever the MCL is exceeded in order to reduce any long-term risk associated with these contaminants.

Staff in the Water Department are working with ADEC making adjustments in our local treatment processes to further reduce the amount of organic material prior to the introduction of chlorine. These changes have already shown a decrease. The City & Borough of Wrangell is also working with ADEC to establish a more robust testing regime to check HAA5 levels more frequently than mandated. This will help us understand sooner when levels have been reduced.

**AGAIN, THIS IS NOT AN EMERGENCY. THERE IS NOTHING YOU NEED TO DO AT THIS TIME.** If a situation arises where the water presents an immediate public health risk, you will be notified within 24 hours. **If you have a severely compromised immune system, have an infant, are pregnant or are elderly, you may be at increased risk and should seek advice from your health care providers about drinking this water.** Representatives from SEARHC AICS Clinic and SEARHC Wrangell Medical Center have been advised of the situation so they can provide assistance.

**You may continue to drink and use water normally.** If you feel you are at increased risk there are two primary options for reducing the level of HAA5 in your drinking water: 1) drink bottled water, or 2) purchase a filter (such as Brita) that is carbon activated (has charcoal) to filter drinking water. Boiling water will not remove any HAA5.

This notice is being issued by the City & Borough of Wrangell in conjunction with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

State Water System ID#: 120143

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