

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER

North Reading Water Department Failed to Conduct Required Assessment to Address Coliform Bacteria Contamination of the Water System

During recent routine monitoring, some water samples collected from our water system tested positive for total coliforms. *Coliforms are bacteria that are naturally present in the environment and are used as an indicator that other, potentially harmful, waterborne pathogens may be present or that a potential pathway exists through which contamination may enter the drinking water distribution system. We found coliforms indicating the need to look for potential problems in water treatment or distribution.*

When this occurs, we are required to conduct an assessment to identify problems and to correct any problems that are found. We failed to conduct the required assessment by September 5, 2019.

Although this incident is not an emergency, as our customers, you have a right to know what happened and what we are doing to correct this situation.

What should I do?

- **You do not need to boil your water or take other corrective actions.** However, if you have specific health concerns, consult your doctor.
- People with severely compromised immune systems, infants, and some elderly may be at increased risk. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by microbes are available from EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 800-426-4791.

What does this mean?

Since total coliform bacteria are generally not harmful themselves, this is not an emergency. If it had been, you would have been notified immediately. Three samples collected on August 6 tested positive for total coliform. Nine repeat samples collected within 24 hours of the Water Department receiving notification from our laboratory all tested negative for total coliform, and the remainder of the samples collected in the month of August also tested negative for total coliform.

Whenever we detect total coliform bacteria in any sample, we also then test that sample to determine whether other bacteria of greater concern – such as *E. coli* – are present. All samples tested negative for the presence of *E. coli*. A positive total coliform sample in our water distribution system also triggers a requirement that we then sample all of our sources to test for *Enterococcus*. We did not find any of these other bacteria in our subsequent testing. If we had, we would have notified you immediately.

What is being done?

The North Reading Water Department continually adds a low dosage of chlorine to the water as a means of protecting against the presence of disease-causing organisms in the drinking water. In response to some water samples testing positive for total coliform, the Water Department increased the dose of chlorine added to the drinking water. In addition, as required, we collected additional coliform samples from our water system to verify this action of additional chlorine was effective in eliminating the presence of total coliform.

For more information, please contact Mark Clark of the Water Department at (978) 664-6046 or by email at water@northreadingma.gov.

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

This notice is being sent to you by the North Reading Water Department, PWS ID # 3213000

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