

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Is cloudy water safe?

A. Water that appears milky is usually the result of harmless tiny air bubbles (dissolved oxygen) trapped in the water, like gas bubbles in carbonated soft drinks. After a glass of this water sits for a few minutes, the water will become clear as the air bubbles float to the top. Since cold water can hold more dissolved oxygen than warm water, this type of cloudiness occurs more often in winter. As the water warms up in your household plumbing, the extra oxygen does not stay dissolved and is released; thus air bubbles. Air bubbles do not affect the safety of the water. If you experience cloudy water that does not clear, call the Department of Public Works at (586) 446-2440.

Q. Is the chlorine used to disinfect water harmful to my health?

A. The GLWA uses chlorine to disinfect our drinking water. Chlorine has been used to treat municipal water in the United States since 1908 and it is the most effective way to ensure that water stays disinfected as it travels through water delivery systems. Chlorine prevents waterborne epidemics such as cholera, typhoid and hepatitis. The amount of chlorine in the drinking water as it leaves the treatment plant is typically 1 milligram per liter (ppm). Chlorine in this quantity poses no known or expected health risk.

Public Participation Opportunities

The city of Sterling Heights welcomes your comments and questions about the 2015 Annual Water Quality Report and will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Please direct your comments or questions to the Department of Public Works at (586) 446-2440.

Detected Contamination Tables

These tables are based on tests conducted by GLWA in 2015. Many tests are conducted throughout the year however, only tests that show the presence of a contaminant are shown here. Below is a key to the terms used in the tables throughout this report.

Symbol	Abbreviation for	Definition/Explanation
AL	Action Level	The concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements which a water system must follow.
HAA5	Haloacetic Acids	HAA5 is the total of bromoacetic, chloroacetic, dibromoacetic, dichloroacetic, and trichloroacetic acids. Compliance is based on the total.
MCL	Maximum Contaminant Level	The highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. MCLs are set as close to the MCLGs as feasible using best available treatment technologies.
MCLG	Maximum Contaminant Level Goal	The level of contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health
MRDL	Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level	The highest level of a disinfectant allowed in drinking water. There is convincing evidence that addition of a disinfectant is necessary for control of microbial contaminants.
MRDLG	Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level Goal	The level of a drinking water disinfectant below which there is no known or expected risk of health. MRDLGs do not reflect the benefits of the use of disinfectants to control microbial contaminants.
pCi/l	Picocuries Per Liter	A measure of radioactivity. Picocurie (pCi) means the quantity of radioactive material producing 2.22 nuclear transformations per minute.
ppb	Parts Per Billion (one in one billion)	The ppb is equivalent to micrograms per liter. A microgram is 1/1000 milligram
ppm	Parts Per Million (one in one million)	The ppm is equivalent to milligrams per liter. A milligram is 1/1000 gram.
NTU	Nephelometric Turbidity Units	Measures the cloudiness of water
TT	Treatment Technique	A required process intended to reduce the level of a contaminant in drinking water.
TTHM	Total Trihalomethanes	Total Trihalomethanes is the sum of chloroform, bromodichloromethane, dibromochloromethane, and bromoform. Compliance is based on the total.

Drinking Water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants can be obtained by calling the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800) 426-4791.

The state of Michigan allows communities, such as Sterling Heights, to monitor for certain contaminants less than once per year because the concentrations of these contaminants are not expected to vary significantly from year to year.

All of the data in the charts below and to the right is representative of the water quality, but some testing data is more than one year old.

2015 Regulated Detected Contaminants Tables of Water Delivered from the Great Lakes Water Authority

Inorganic Chemicals – Monitoring at Plant Finished Water Tap								
Regulated Contaminant	Test Date	Unit	Health Goal MCLG	Allowed Level MCL	Level Detected	Range of Detection	Violation yes/no	Major Sources in Drinking Water
Fluoride	May 11, 2015	ppm	4	4	0.46	n/a	no	Erosion of natural deposits; Water additive to promote strong teeth; Discharge from fertilizer and aluminum factories
Nitrate	May 11, 2015	ppm	10	10	0.30	n/a	no	Runoff from fertilizer use; Leaching from septic tanks & sewage; Erosion of natural deposits
Combined Radium	May 13, 2014	pCi/L	0	5	0.86 +/- 0.55	n/a	no	Erosion of natural Deposits; Radium 226 & 228

Disinfection By-Products – Monitoring in Distribution System Stage 2 Disinfection By-Products								
Regulated Contaminant	Test Date	Unit	Health Goal MCLG	Allowed Level MCL	Highest LRAA	Range of Detection	Violation yes/no	Major Sources in Drinking Water
Total TTHM	2015	ppb	n/a	80	31	15-44	no	By-product of drinking water chlorination
HAA5	2015	ppb	n/a	60	12	8-15	no	By-product of drinking water disinfection

Disinfectant Residual – Monitoring in Distribution System by Treatment Plant								
Regulated Contaminant	Test Date	Unit	Health Goal MRDGL	Allowed Level MRDL	Highest RAA	Range of Detection	Violation yes/no	Major Sources in Drinking Water
Total Chlorine Residual	Jan-Dec 2015	ppm	4	4	0.82	0.71-0.91	no	Water additive used to control microbes

Regulated Contaminant	Treatment Technique	Typical Source of Contaminant
Total Organic Carbon (ppm)	The Total Organic Carbon (TOC) removal ratio is calculated as the ratio between the actual TOC and the TOC removal requirements. The TOC was measured each month and because the level was low, there is No requirement for TOC removal.	Erosion of natural deposits

2015 Turbidity – Monitored every four hours at Plant Finished Water Tap

Highest Single Measurement Cannot Exceed 1 NTU	Lowest Monthly % of Samples Meeting Turbidity Limit of 0.3 NTU (minimum 95%)	Violation yes/no	Major Sources in Drinking Water
0.2 NTU	100%	no	Soil Runoff

Turbidity is a measure of the cloudiness of water. We monitor it because it is a good indicator of the effectiveness of our filtration system.

2015 Microbiological Contaminants – Monthly Monitoring in Distribution System

Regulated Contaminant	Health Goal MCLG	Allowed Level MCL	Highest Number Detected	Violation yes/no	Major Sources in Drinking Water
Total Coliform Bacteria	0	Presence of Coliform Bacteria in > 5% of monthly samples	0	no	Naturally present in the environment
E. coli Bacteria	0	A routine sample and a repeat sample are total coliform positive, and one is also fecal or E. coli/positive	0	no	Human waste and animal fecal waste

2014 Sterling Heights Lead and Copper Testing Results (testing performed every 3 years)

Regulated Contaminant	Test Date	Unit	Health Goal MCLG	Action Level AL	90th Percentile Value	Number of Samples Over AL	Violation yes/no	Major Sources in Drinking Water
Lead	2014	ppb	0	15	0 ppb	0	no	Corrosion of household plumbing system; Erosion of natural deposits.
Copper	2014	ppb	1300	1300	26.1 ppb	0	no	Corrosion of household plumbing system; Erosion of natural deposits; Leaching from wood preservatives

* The 90th percentile value means 90 percent of the homes tested have lead and copper levels below the given 90th percentile value. If the 90th percentile value is above the AL additional requirements must be met.

2014/15 Special Monitoring

Regulated Contaminant	Unit	Health Goal MCLG	Allowed Level MCL	Level Detected	Typical Source of Contaminant
Sodium	ppm	n/a	n/a	4.96	Erosion of natural deposits

Unrelated contaminants are those for which EPA has not established drinking water standards. Monitoring helps EPA to determine where certain contaminants occur and whether it needs to regulate those contaminants



2015 Annual Water Quality Report

Important Information on Sterling Heights Water Quality & Safety

Sterling Heights City Council

Mayor Michael C. Taylor
 Mayor Pro Tem Joseph V. Romano
 Councilwoman Deanna Koski
 Councilwoman Maria Schmidt
 Councilman Nate Shannon
 Councilman Doug Skrzyniarz
 Councilwoman Barbara A. Ziarko

City Manager

Mark Vanderpool

Public Works Director

Michael Moore



www.sterling-heights.net
 (586) 446-CITY (2489)

The City of Sterling Heights wants you to know your tap water is safe to drink and meets or surpasses all federal and state standards for quality and safety. The City of Sterling Heights is proud of the fine drinking water it supplies and is honored to provide this report to you. The 2015 Consumers Annual Report on Water Quality shows the sources of our water, lists the results of water quality tests, and contains important information about water and health. The city of Sterling Heights will notify you immediately if there is ever any reason for concern about our water. We are pleased to show you how the water delivered to you has surpassed water quality standards as mandated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the State of Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).



About Our System

The city purchases its drinking water from the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA). The water is treated and processed before being delivered to the city's water distribution system.

Source Water

Your source water comes from one of two sources:

- The Detroit River, within Lake St. Clair, Clinton River, Detroit River, Rouge River, Ecorse River, in the U.S. and parts of the Thames River, Little River, Turkey Creek, and Sydenham watershed in Canada, or
- The lower Lake Huron watershed which includes numerous short, seasonal streams that drain to Lake Huron.

The MDEQ, in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey, the GLWA and the Michigan Public Health Institute, performed a source water assessment in 2004 to determine the susceptibility of potential contamination. The susceptibility rating is on a seven-tiered scale from very low to very high based primarily on geologic sensitivity, water chemistry and contaminant sources. The susceptibility of the Detroit River source water intakes were found to be highly susceptible to potential

contamination. The Lake Huron source water intake is categorized as moderately low susceptibility to potential contaminate sources.

However, all GLWA water treatment plants that use source water from the Detroit River and the Lake Huron water treatment plant have historically provided satisfactory treatment to meet drinking water standards.

GLWA has initiated source-water protection activities that include chemical containment, spill response, and a mercury reduction plan. GLWA participates in a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit discharge program and has an emergency response management plan. In 2015, GLWA received a grant from the MDEQ to develop a source water protection program for the Detroit River and Lake Huron intakes. This program includes seven elements that include the following: roles and duties of government units and water supply agencies, delineation of a source water protection area, identification of potential source water protection area, management approaches for protection, contingency plans, citing of new sources, and public participation.

For more information, please contact the Sterling Heights Department of Public Works at (586) 446-2440.

How Do We Know Our Water is Safe?

The GLWA treatment facilities operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The treatment process begins with disinfecting the source water with chlorine to kill harmful microorganisms that can cause illness.

Next, a chemical called Alum is mixed with the water to remove the fine particles that make the water cloudy or turbid. Alum causes the particles to clump together and settle to the bottom.

Fluoride is also added to protect our teeth from cavities and decay. The water then flows through fine sand filters called beds. These filters remove even more particles and certain microorganisms that are resistant to chlorine.

Finally, a small amount of phosphoric acid and chlorine are added to the treated water just before it leaves the treatment plant. The phosphoric acid helps control the lead that may dissolve in water from household plumbing systems. The chlorine keeps the water disinfected as it travels through the water mains to reach your home.

In addition to a carefully controlled and monitored treatment process, the water is tested for a variety of substances before treatment, during various stages of treatment, and throughout the distribution system.

The GLWA tests hundreds of samples each week in their certified laboratories by a highly qualified, trained staff. GLWA water not only meets health and safety standards, but also ranks among the top 10 in the country for quality and value. For more information about safe drinking water, visit the EPA at www.epa.gov/safewater/.

Additional Information

In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, the EPA prescribes regulations, which limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations establish limits for contaminants in bottled water, which must provide the same protection for public health.

Drinking Water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants can be obtained by calling the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800) 426-4791.

The sources of drinking water (both tap water and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and radioactive material, and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activity. Contaminants that may be present in source water include:

- Microbial contaminants, such as viruses and bacteria, from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, and wildlife.
- Inorganic contaminants, such as salts and metals, which can be naturally occurring or result from urban storm water runoff, industrial or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining or farming.
- Pesticides and herbicides, from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban storm water runoff and residential uses.
- Organic chemical contaminants, including synthetic and volatile organics, which are by-products of industrial processes and petroleum production, and can also come from gas stations, urban storm water runoff and septic systems.
- Radioactive contaminants, naturally occurring or the result of oil and gas production and mining activities.

Health Information

Lead

Since 1992, the City's water division has been testing homes with plumbing systems that may contribute lead to their household water supply. Of the twenty five (25) homes tested in 2014, none were found to have lead levels above the action level.

Homes in Sterling Heights do have copper pipes that, prior to late 1988, were connected by lead solder. Lead solder was widely used prior to being banned in 1988, but it is still available in hardware stores for purposes other than home plumbing. The actual presence of lead connections does not indicate a lead problem. Over time, a protective coating builds up inside the pipe. This coating can reduce the amount of lead that might dissolve in the water. If your home was built prior to 1989, it may have piping that has lead soldered joints.

If present, elevated levels of lead can cause serious health problems, especially for women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. The City of Sterling Heights is responsible for providing high quality drinking water, but cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components. When your water has been sitting for several hours, you can minimize the potential for lead exposure by flushing your tap for 30 seconds to 2 minutes before using water for drinking or cooking. If you are concerned about lead in your water, you may wish to have your water tested.

Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure is available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800) 426-4791 or at: <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/lead>

People With Special Health Concerns

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immuno-compromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants may be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. EPA/CDC guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by Cryptosporidium and other microbial contaminants are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800) 426-4791