

**STATEMENT OF
GLENN S. GERSTELL
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF DIRECTORS
D.C. WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY**

Madam Chair and members of the Council, we have been working almost around the clock since we last appeared here to communicate the facts about lead levels in the water supply to District residents through a variety of channels. In addition, we are continuing to work with EPA, the Army Corps of Engineers, the D.C. Department of Health and respected scientists and academic experts to determine the extent and significance of the increase in lead levels so we can take effective actions to attack this problem.

Our priorities are to discover the cause of elevated lead levels, identify the solution, fix the problem, and make sure citizens get the information they need and deserve. Here are some of the actions we've taken toward this end:

- We are pleased with the results of the water tests that we conducted in cooperation with the D.C. Public Schools. Nearly 99 percent of the water samples from public schools and facilities contained either no detectable quantities of lead or levels below EPA's "action level" of 15 ppb. This confirms that the drinking water that WASA is supplying from our water mains to the schools and throughout the District has essentially no lead. But of course there is more to the story and we recognize that ultimately the issue is what comes out of each individual sink and water fountain, whether in schools or homes, whether under WASA's control or not. Where the problem is within the control of private homeowners or schools, we will work with them to address it. In that regard, we were pleased to note that the DC Public Schools, who have been very cooperative, immediately put out of service and are replacing the eight individual faucets or fountains found to have problems.
- The Board of Directors held a special meeting yesterday which was our second full meeting since this issue captured public attention earlier this month, and which of course was open to the public. We've also had various Board committee meetings and conference calls as the entire Board is taking this matter very seriously. At yesterday's meeting, the District Board members approved in principle WASA's purchase of water filters if the DC Department of Health decides that such filters would be appropriate for pregnant women and children under age six who live in homes with a lead service pipe. We are actively working with the Department of Health to try to answer the public's questions. We also instructed management to continue to look into various options to replace all lead service pipes throughout the District if it is concluded that that is the best way to address this problem. And the Council and the public will certainly be a part of that decision-making process.

- To date, WASA management has hosted or given presentations about this issue at five community meetings throughout the city. Our schedule includes presentations throughout the month of March.
- The March issue of *What's On Tap*, WASA's newsletter that is mailed with monthly bills, outlines what is being done to address lead in drinking water and precautions residents can take.
- WASA is sending sample test kits, upon request, to homes with known lead service pipes and paying for the testing. Thus far, we've sent out over 7,200 test kits but have received back only a portion of those. We are encouraging people to send their completed test samples back to us.
- We have tripled the number of lead services hotline phone lines and have staffed them with additional trained customer service representatives to eliminate waiting times. We have also extended hotline hours. We've responded to more than 18,000 calls and e-mails. I am pleased to report that we have now caught up on our backlog of voicemails and I am informed by management that all calls and emails to the lead hotline are responded to either during the same day received or the next business day.
- We sent a letter in both English and Spanish, with accompanying information about this issue, to every resident of the District. We are sending a second letter with detailed information to homes that may have lead service lines.
- We've extensively added to our website at www.dcwasa.com, which now contains extensive information about lead as well as links to other sites where visitors can get additional facts.
- WASA General Manager Jerry Johnson, Chief Engineer Michael Marcotte and I have conducted numerous media interviews to communicate facts and findings as we get them.

The Board recognizes these are just steps on a long path toward a solution. We look forward to working with the Council and the agencies of the District government, including the Interagency Task Force, to solving this problem as quickly as we can.

Thank you.