



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 2
290 BROADWAY
NEW YORK, NY 10007-1866

October 29, 2019

Honorable Michael Melham
Mayor, Township of Belleville
152 Washington Avenue
Belleville, NJ 07109

Dear Mayor Melham:

Thank you for your further communication on October 10 regarding the drinking water in Belleville. As you know, the Belleville water system – like all public water systems in the nation – is legally obligated to ensure certain levels of protection with respect to the drinking water it provides its customers. At this time, the Belleville water system continues to be out of compliance with federal requirements that pertain specifically to elevated levels of lead found in residents' drinking water. To that end, our Enforcement and Compliance Assurance Division has today reached out again to you and the Belleville Water Department to identify the steps that must be taken to ensure full compliance with federal regulatory obligations.

As I explained in my letter of October 8, Newark has provided point-of-use filters to customers whose water comes from the Pequannock system. More recently, Newark provided bottled water while the effectiveness of the filters was carefully evaluated by Newark in collaboration with EPA and NJDEP.

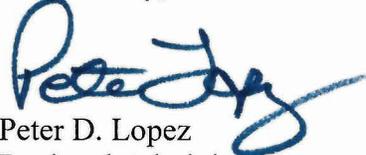
Based on preliminary information from the filter study Newark conducted, the city found that a combination of flushing followed by filtration is the best way to reduce exposure to lead until the corrosion control treatment is optimized. Newark is currently providing important guidance to its customers, recommending that before they use tap water for drinking or cooking, they should first flush water from their faucets, and follow that step with filtration from a properly installed filter certified by NSF International to remove lead. Additionally, Newark continues to distribute filters to its citizens along with this guidance.

I'd like to highlight that on December 21, 2018 the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) wrote to Mr. Nicholas Wendling of the Belleville Water Department, strongly recommending that certain actions be taken as soon as practicable to protect the health of Belleville residents, because Belleville purchases water from the Pequannock Gradient of the Newark Water Department. Among other recommendations, NJDEP urged that Belleville residents be advised to flush and use a point-of-use filter, just as Newark has advised its customers.

In your note you also state that there are “three Belleville residents confirmed with lead poisoning in their blood.” EPA stands ready to discuss how we can assist you or to identify State or County government resources that might be available to help investigate the possible causes of these residents’ elevated blood lead levels.

Please let us know by November 16, 2019 that you have initiated steps to address the concerns that you have raised and those that are necessary to return to compliance. My staff and I are available to meet with you directly and can provide technical assistance and guidance in this effort.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Peter D. Lopez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Peter D. Lopez
Regional Administrator

cc: Hon. Catherine McCabe
Commissioner, NJDEP