

Technical Expert Working Group Conference Call

Friday February 27, 2009
10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

DRAFT CALL SUMMARY

Attendees:

EPA Region 3 and contractors: Bill Arguto, Jennie Saxe, George Rizzo, Kathy Martel, and Laura Dufresne

The Washington Aqueduct: Tom Jacobus, Miranda Brown, Lloyd Stowe and Patty Gamby

DCWASA and contractors: Rich Giani, Charlie Kiely, Steve Reiber, and John Civardi
DC Department of the Environment: William Slade, Collin Burrell

Agenda

There were no changes or additions to the agenda. The meeting agenda is included as Attachment A to this call summary.

Summary of Discussions by Topic Area

1. EPA Personnel Update

Bill Arguto has joined EPA Region 3 as the new Drinking Water Branch Chief. Welcome Bill!

2. Washington Aqueduct Pipe Loop Update

Lloyd Stowe provided pipe loop data to the TEWG prior to the call. The Aqueduct is not actively using the pipe loops for research at this time. The pipe loop data include graphs showing trends in total and dissolved lead for the March 2005-February 2009 period, and graphs comparing total and dissolved lead concentrations, respectively, to water temperature for the period January 2008 through February 2009. Lead levels continue to be temperature dependent with elevated lead levels occurring during the warmer summer months. The Aqueduct is planning for future pipe loop studies to investigate the potential impacts of reducing the phosphoric acid dose in order to reduce chemical costs. They have received a proposal for the future studies.

3. DCWASA Pipe Loop Update

Rich Giani provided a graph of the DCWASA Pipe Loop 1 (the control loop) prior to the TEWG call. The graph represents lead data from September 2006 through February 21,

2009. Rich noted that lead levels continue to be low (≤ 5 ppb) and are slightly lower than the same period last year. DCWASA has seen similar trends in 90th percentile lead levels for LCR samples. Lead levels are expected to increase slightly during the summer months and immediately following the chlorine burn period.

4. Brief Recap of Current Events

The January issue of ES&T included a peer-reviewed paper titled “Elevated Blood Lead in Young Children Due to Lead-Contaminated Drinking Water: Washington, DC, 2001–2004” prepared by Marc Edwards of Virginia Tech. See the abstract at the following link: <http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/es802789w>

The paper has been discussed publicly through various media (Washington Post articles and radio talk shows). The paper challenges previous, peer reviewed findings by CDC and researchers from the George Washington School of Public Health. In response to the paper and the media events, a DC council hearing was held on February 10th and a District Department of the Environment task force met Feb. 20th to review the issues and continue developing requirements for an independent study of lead in drinking water.

EPA Region 3 and the TEWG discussed possible actions for addressing findings in the paper and recent publicity. Possible action items include:

- Consider conducting a national survey of large utilities.
- Consider the need for an independent review of lead testing protocols and health issues related to blood lead levels. There are many different agencies that could provide this independent review. Several suggestions were the National Institute of Health in DC, and the Environmental Institute of Health in Chicago.
- Consider the need for a critical independent review of the ES&T paper to determine if the paper’s conclusions are valid.
- Identify ways to improve risk communication to assure the public that the water is safe to drink (i.e. research, new outreach materials, public meetings). TEWG participants believe that it is important to convey that the lead issue is a national one and not limited to the DC area. In fact, DCWASA is more proactive than many other water systems. Jerry Johnson and Tom Jacobus will participate in a radio call-in program on Monday March 2nd from 12-1 and hope to receive support from the health department in conveying a positive message.
- Review the ES&T paper and identify additional possible corrective actions and improved messaging.

John Civardi noted that a new reference book may provide helpful information: The Great Lead Pipe Water Disaster (2008). The book covers 150 years experience with lead pipe. The author is a Professor of History at University of Pittsburgh.

As a follow-up to the call Jennie Saxe distributed the following:

- A copy of the ES&T article and supporting information.
- A link to the DDOE Water Quality Task Force Information:
<http://ddoe.dc.gov/ddoe/cwp/view,a,1209,q,498508.asp> .
- Information on the book The Great Lead Pipe Water Disaster (2008).

The next TEWG call will be held on March 27th to discuss new activities related to the ES&T paper.

Attachment A: Call Agenda

- * Call for last-minute agenda items
- * EPA personnel update
- * Washington Aqueduct pipe loop update (WA)
- * DCWASA pipe loop update (DCWASA)
- * Brief recap of current events