



SCOTT A. THOMPSON
Executive Director

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

KEVIN STITT
Governor

March 26, 2020

Dear Drinking Water System Official,

As you may know, on Sunday, March 15, 2020, Governor Kevin Stitt announced a state of emergency for all 77 counties in Oklahoma due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. In an effort to ensure that public health continues to be protected by the provision of safe drinking water by Oklahoma's public water supplies (PWSs), the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is sending this letter emphasizing the importance of continued operation of your water system, including corrosion control treatment processes, during the coronavirus pandemic.

Corrosion control treatment both protects drinking water infrastructure and provides consumers protection from the release of metal contaminants into their drinking water. The source of these metal contaminants is often the consumer's own premise plumbing, and corrosion control treatment may be the only barrier in place between these contaminants and the consumer. Corrosion control treatment often involves pH and/or alkalinity adjustment, the addition of a corrosion inhibitor (such as orthophosphate), or a combination of the two. Directly adjusting or ceasing these corrosion control treatment processes can have a major and immediate impact on levels of metals release and may expose consumers to lead, copper, and/or other metal contaminants. Additionally, adjusting other treatment processes, such as coagulation or disinfection, may indirectly impact the efficacy of corrosion control treatment. Therefore, it is important that before any changes to water treatment processes are made, the impacts to corrosion control treatment be considered as well.

As the coronavirus pandemic unfolds, the availability of chemicals used in drinking water treatment processes, including corrosion control treatment, may be reduced. Therefore, DEQ encourages Oklahoma's PWS systems to be proactive, plan ahead, and to consider these possibilities:

- Chemicals used for pH adjustment become limited or unavailable.
- Chemicals used for alkalinity adjustment become limited or unavailable.
- Supplies of corrosion inhibitors become limited or unavailable.

If normal sources of chemical supply become unavailable, the best course of action would be to identify an alternative source of supply in order to avoid any unintended impacts to corrosion control treatment. Another option would be to identify alternative chemical treatments which achieve the same objectives as current treatment processes. For example, there are several chemical treatments which can be employed to adjust pH, and there are also several corrosion inhibitors which, although different in formulation, may be similarly effective at protecting



consumers from metal contaminants (e.g., using a plain orthophosphate inhibitor in lieu of a zinc orthophosphate). A final action would be to consider interim corrosion control treatment processes. Examples include rationing corrosion inhibitor supplies and adjusting finished water pH upward. Because corrosion and corrosion control treatment is site and system specific, operators or others familiar with the PWS system's characteristics, would need to make the decision on operational changes.

If, due to the ongoing emergency, corrosion control treatment or other treatment processes need to be adjusted, please contact your PWS District Engineer or PWS Compliance Coordinator. They will work with your PWS system staff to determine the best course of action. The PWS District Engineer or PWS Compliance Coordinator for your system can both be reached at 405-702-8100 or at drinkingwater@deq.ok.gov.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and for partnering with DEQ to protect public health and provide high-quality drinking water during this emergency.

Sincerely,



Shellie R. Chard, Director
Water Quality Division