

Michigan

# Officials say Flint water is getting better, but many residents unsatisfied

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FLINT, MI -- City and state officials said Wednesday, Jan. 21, that Flint is making strides in controlling total trihalomethanes in drinking water, but a skeptical crowd of residents at a town hall meeting seemed unconvinced.

Flint water customers, some carrying bottles of discolored water, packed the meeting, designed to spell out the city's efforts to improve water quality, but Department of Public Works Director Howard Croft ended the session before answering all the questions submitted in writing, and many residents walked out or tried to shout their questions and comments.

"People want solutions faster," said Brittany Reese, who said she came to the meeting to hear how she can protect her health -- even if it means adding extra filters to her home.

"We're not satisfied, but people are trying to nitpick the whole system," Reese said of the crowd. "There's obviously a serious problem with the (system)."

The quality and cost of Flint water has increasingly become a top priority for customers, the City Council and Mayor Dayne Walling, who this week **[called on Gov. Rick Snyder for help](#)** in addressing the problem, partly with millions in state or federal funds to fix the city's aging water transmission system.

Water customers were told earlier this month that the city is in violation of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act because of the high level of trihalomethane (TTHM) in drinking water samples last year.

TTHM is a byproduct of chlorinating river water. The notices sent to water customers say Flint water is safe to drink but warns those with "a severely compromised immune system, (who) have an infant or are elderly" that they "may be at increased risk and should seek advice about drinking water from your health care provider."

TTHM became a problem for the city after it ended a 50-year relationship with the city of Detroit for purchasing treated Lake Huron water and began treating Flint River water instead.

The city and county are partners in the Karegnondi Water Authority, which is building a pipeline to Lake Huron to bring lake water here for use by the end of 2016.

That's not soon enough for many, including Claire McClinton, a member of the Flint Democracy Defense League and one of about 150 people at the meeting.

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"This was, as far as coming to a solution, a total waste of time," McClinton said. "To me, (the water is) like somebody dropped a bomb on this city. We don't need to test. We know (it's a problem)."

Officials from the state Department of Environmental Quality reviewed issues, including bacteria and TTHM, that Flint water officials have dealt with since switching to river water. They continued to advise those with concerns to consult their doctors about whether to drink it.

"Is there a risk in the short-term? That depends on you ... it's an individual thing," said Steve Busch, Lansing and Jackson district supervisor in the DEQ's office of drinking water and municipal assistance. "You can make a judgment (after talking to your doctor)."

State and city officials have said exposure to TTHM is a long-term concern for some if they drink water with elevated TTHM for several decades.

City Councilman Scott Kincaid said after Wednesday's meeting that there will continue to be problems with Flint water until the city again uses lake water.

"The only solution I see in the short-term is getting Lake Huron water back in our system so people feel the water is clear and safe," Kincaid said.

Emergency manager Jerry Ambrose told members of the council before the water meeting that officials plan to continue efforts aimed at fixing the entire city water distribution and treatment systems.

"There's nobody in this administration that's happy with the quality of the water," Ambrose said. "We're not satisfied having had to have put (a notice of violation) out."

Although the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department has said it is "ready, willing and able" to start selling Lake Huron water to Flint again, city officials here have said Detroit's offer is too costly and would increase the cost of water by more than \$12 million annually.

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