

Michigan

# University of Michigan-Flint reveals water quality test results to campus



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FLINT, MI -- Test results for water on the University of Michigan-Flint campus revealed that water is safe to drink throughout campus except for two isolated locations.

The full results of UM-Flint's water testing were shared with the campus community on Friday, Feb. 6, and showed that two areas on campus showed high levels of lead and that some water should not be used for drinking.

Mike Lane, director of Environment, Health, and Safety at UM-Flint, said even though further testing is being done on those sections of campus, the issues are not related to the city of Flint's overall struggles with transitioning to using the Flint River as its primary water source.

UM-Flint and Mott Community College made the decision to do their own water quality testing on their respective campuses after the city of Flint notified customers in January that the city is in violation of the federal Safe Water Drinking Act due to high levels of

## FLINT RIVER WATER

a disinfectant byproduct called total trihalomethane, or TTHM, in the water system in 2014.

UM-Flint's results, provided by an independent consultant, showed low levels of TTHM.

"However, in the first round of sampling there were two isolated fountains within two separate buildings where the test data initially showed poor water quality," the email read. " (Environment, Health and Safety) shut down those fountains, retested and continues to investigate."

The two fountain locations were the third floor Northbank Center South building hallway and the Central Energy Plant on the first floor.

Occupants in the Northbank Center South building are asked not drink the water until further notice due to elevated lead concentration.

Drinking fountains and sinks will be marked with signs until it's safe to drink the water, Lane said.

The issues could stem from old pipes or other pipe or water system issues, Lane said. Investigation is still ongoing to correct the issue in the Northbank Center South building, which houses research offices, attorney offices and other office space for organizations.

There is no classroom space in the affected building, Lane said.

UM-Flint and MCC originally **notified students and staff of the testing in emails** sent out Tuesday, Jan. 13, the same day some residents staged a water quality protest at city hall and city council members hosted a town hall meeting about the issue.

In December, the state Department of Environmental Quality found the city in violation of federal standards for excess trihalomethane, or TTHM. Flint sent out notices to all water customers saying that over many years, the byproduct could cause certain health problems.

Although Flint and DEQ officials have said the water is safe to drink, a citywide notice told residents with "a severely compromised immune system, (who) have an infant or are elderly" that they may be at increased risk from drinking water with high TTHM levels and should seek advice about drinking the water from a health care provider.

The notice also says people who drink water with TTHM in excess of the maximum contaminant level over many years may experience problems with their liver, kidneys or central nervous system and have an increased risk of getting cancer.

That notice caused MCC and UM-Flint to do their own testing.

Overall, Lane said he's happy to see the results of the water testing, especially with the TTHM levels being acceptable.

"We didn't know what the results were going to be and we were pleased to see that the water coming to our buildings were acceptable. But we're going to continue to monitor it, probably do another test in the next four weeks," Lane said. "The important thing here is that we are doing testing from time to time, whether quarterly or monthly.

"We're committed to making sure the people on the campus are safe. ... We were pleased to see the results come back the way they have."

An email was sent on Jan. 24 to the UM-Flint campus community saying the results (including trihalomethanes or THMs) were below the Maximum Contaminant Limits (MCLs). Then on Friday, Feb. 6, the email was expanded to include the lead levels at the two locations.

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A second round and third round of testing of Northbank Center South building kitchen sinks and fountains took place to continue looking for the root of the problem.

"Results from some of the initial water draws showed an elevated lead concentration. However, after water was flushed/purged through the fixtures sample results were either non-detect or below the lead action level, with only one exception," the Jan. 24 email stated. "The results from sinks and fountains that were identified as seldom or rarely used which allows for water to sit for long periods of time, had the highest observed concentrations."

A third round of "first draw" sampling was conducted last week on drinking fountains and kitchen sinks on the first, second and third floors in Northbank Center South building. Although, more than half of the sample results were below the lead action level, the third floor hallway fountains and second floor sinks continue to show elevated lead concentrations and will require further action and corrective measures, the email stated.

Kitchen sinks and fountains being investigated /tested have and will remain tagged out of service "Do Not Use/Water Sampling In Progress" until further data is available and the investigation of the water distribution system in those areas is complete.

"Until further notice and until more data is available, NBC South building occupants impacted by this situation have been cautioned to flush water prior to use, only use the water for cleaning purposes and not for consumption, do not use restroom sinks for drinking water, and do not use sinks or fountains that remain tagged out of service," the email stated.

The water issue has been gaining a lot of attention throughout Flint and beyond. There have been multiple protests and community meetings. There have been free bottled water give-a-ways and a Flint Head Start program began only using bottled water.

Environmental activist Erin Brockovich spoke out and said she was prepared to come to Flint if needed.

A water expert working for environmental activist Erin Brockovich is **planning a trip to Flint to take part in a Feb. 14 public demonstration** for clean water.

MCC officials said they would be **testing the water early this month** and UM-Flint officials said they will continue to test the water that is used on campus every four to six weeks and monitor any changes or trends.

If there are any issues that are found as a result of the testing, that information will be communicated to the UM-Flint campus, according to a Jan. 24 email.

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