

# Portsmouth Water and Fire District

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## NEWS RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE: Immediately

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### Portsmouth

## PORTSMOUTH WATER HAS LEVELS OF TRIHALOMETHANES (TTHMs) ABOVE DRINKING WATER STANDARDS

As required by State and Federal Regulations the Portsmouth Water and Fire District will be mailing a notice to all of its customers that a drinking water standard for disinfection byproducts has been exceeded.

The Portsmouth Water and Fire District routinely tests at various sites within its water distribution system for Disinfection Byproducts (DBPs). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets standards for controlling the level of disinfectants (chlorine and chlorine dioxide) and DBPs in drinking water, including trihalomethanes (TTHMs). The average results of tests taken during the last four quarters show that the District exceeded the standard or maximum contaminant level for TTHMs. The EPA standard for TTHMs is 80 parts per billion (ppb) for an annual running average. Portsmouth Water's running annual average for TTHMs for the last four quarters (October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014) is 89.2 ppb.

This is not an emergency and District customers **do not need to boil water or take other action**. The EPA has established public notification rules and tiers under which specific violations are assigned. The TTHM violation is a Tier 2 violation of the drinking water regulations. Tier 2 violations are considered less urgent than Tier 1 violations because there is little immediate risk to consumers. Tier 2 violations require that a public notification be delivered to water customers within 30 days after a violation is discovered.

The District purchases treated water from the City of Newport. Newport is in the process of constructing a new Lawton Valley Treatment Plant in Portsmouth and substantial improvements to the Station 1 Treatment Plant in Newport. The total project cost is \$84 million. Due to the challenging water quality of the City of Newport's nine reservoirs, Advanced Water Treatment processes have been incorporated into the two water treatment plants in order to assure compliance with drinking water standards, particularly the TTHM standards. The Station One plant recently became operational and the Lawton Valley Plant, from which the District obtains its water supply, is scheduled to be operational before the end of 2014.

In addition, the following operational measures have been employed by the District for some time to reduce TTHM formation:

- The amount of chlorine added to the water from time to time by the District has been reduced while still ensuring reliable bacteriological control.
- The District has installed hydraulic mixing systems in its four water storage tanks to reduce water age, which can contribute to the formation of TTHMs.
- The District continues to conduct an annual unidirectional water main flushing program, which helps reduce TTHM formation.

In accordance with regulations, the Rhode Island Department of Health has been consulted regarding the notification being mailed to Portsmouth Water and Fire District customers.

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Copy to:

The Providence Journal  
The Fall River Herald News  
The Sakonnet Times  
The Newport Daily News

Portsmouth Patch  
hard deadlines  
WADK Radio

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER**  
**Portsmouth Water and Fire District PWS#1592022**

**Portsmouth Water and Fire District Water Has Levels of Total Trihalomethanes (TTHMs)**  
**Above Drinking Water Standards**

Our water system recently violated a drinking water standard. Although this is not an emergency, as our customers, you have a right to know what happened, what you should do, and what we are doing to correct the situation.

The Portsmouth Water and Fire District is receiving its water from the City of Newport public water system. The Portsmouth Water and Fire District routinely tests at various sites within the distribution system for disinfectant by products (DBPs). EPA sets standards for controlling the levels of disinfectants and DBPs in drinking water, including total trihalomethanes (TTHMs). The average results of tests taken during the last four quarters show that our system exceeded the standard or maximum contaminant level (MCL), for TTHMs. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standard for TTHMs is 80 ppb, parts per billion, for a running annual average. Portsmouth Water and Fire District average level of TTHMs for the last four quarters (October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014) is 89.2 ppb.

**WHAT SHOULD I DO?** There are no actions that you need to take at this time. You DO NOT need to use an alternate (i.e., bottled) water supply. You DO NOT need to boil your water or take other corrective action. However, if you have specific health concerns, consult your doctor.

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?** This is NOT an emergency or immediate risk. If it had been, you would have been notified immediately.

Many water systems treat water with a chemical disinfectant, such as chlorine, in order to inactivate pathogens that cause disease. While disinfectants are effective in controlling many harmful microorganisms, they react with organic and inorganic matter in the water to form DBPs, some of which pose health risks at certain levels. Some people who drink water containing trihalomethanes in excess of the MCL over many years may experience problems with their liver, kidneys, or central nervous system, and may have an increased risk of getting cancer. The public health benefits of chlorine disinfection practices are significant and well recognized. Consequently, one of the most complex questions facing water supply professionals is how to reduce risks from disinfectants and DBPs while providing increased protection against microbial contaminants.

**WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT IS BEING DONE?**

TTHMs are a group of volatile organic compounds (Chloroform, Bromodichloromethane, Dibromochloromethane and Bromoform) which form with time when the natural organics in water react with chlorine. Because of the source water quality in Newport's reservoirs, removing the level of organics necessary to meet the TTHM standard, particularly during the warm weather months, is a challenge. The length of time water remains in the distribution system, commonly referred to as "water age", is also known to produce higher TTHM levels as the water gets older.

Portsmouth Water has taken steps to lower TTHMs in your drinking water, such as reducing water age in the distribution system and installing aeration in the storage tanks. Newport Water has taken steps to lower TTHMs in our drinking water, such as installation of mixing and aeration systems, adjustments to the chlorine dioxide and pH levels to better control DBPs in the system, and implementing enhanced water treatment processes in the water treatment plants.

The City of Newport is in the process of upgrading the Station No. 1 Water Treatment Plant in Newport and constructing the new Lawton Valley Water Treatment Plant in Portsmouth. These improvements include advanced water treatment processes in order to assure the sufficient level of organics removal to control TTHMs. The project should be completed and operational by December 2014.

**HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE PROBLEM?**

For more information, please contact William McGlenn at (401) 683-2090 or in writing to, Portsmouth Water and Fire District, PO Box 99, Portsmouth, RI 02871. For general information on TTHMs, you may also call the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791 or visit the EPA website at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater>.

*Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example people in apartments, nursing homes, schools and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.*

This public notice is being sent to you by Portsmouth Water and Fire District - PWS ID# 1592022 Date distributed: 09/10/14