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TOO LATE TO TURN BACK – Courtney Krause, left, may be possessing a reluctant look in this shot, but she ultimately took the plunge with Joe Carroll, both students at Grand Valley State University, during the Polar Bear swim on Saturday. It was the first time either of them had participated in the dive.

Photo by Jenny Haglund

FVOP: Lead content is not an issue for Iosco water systems

by Jenny Haglund

EAST TAWAS – The current water crisis in Flint has caused people in other regions to question the safety of their own drinking water, especially when it comes to lead content.

But for those along the Iosco County shoreline who receive treated water from the Huron Shore Regional Utility Authority (HSRUA), experts say there is no reason to fear the lead content within the water being distributed.

HSRUA, which is operated by Fleis & VandenBrink Operations (FVOP), provides treated water to the municipalities of Oscoda, AuSable and Baldwin townships, East Tawas and Tawas City.

The actions of the authority are monitored by both the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the water must meet the Safe Drinking Water Act guidelines of these agencies.

When it comes to lead content, the action level outlined by the EPA and the Safe Drinking Water

Act, or when a party would have to take corrective measures, is 15 parts per billion (ppb) or greater, according to Blair Selover, FVOP manager. The formula is based on a 90th percentile calculation.

Water is tested at both the plant and the faucets in the homes which are served by HSRUA, with the residential samples being taken first thing in the morning to ensure the existence of the worst possible conditions.

Each community does testing within its own boundaries and the municipality collects its own samples to be sent to a lab for analysis.

Homeowners receive all of the test results, said Selover, pointing out that samples of the treated water from the HSRUA plant have not detected any lead.

This water is also treated to prevent corrosion within the distribution system and one's home.

"Depending on water chemistry, phosphates are used to control the water's pH levels. Phosphate treatment deposits a thin layer or coating on the inside of pipes, which prevents contamination,"

stated Selover.

The most recent sample results for each of the municipalities serviced by HSRUA, including copper content, are outlined below, as provided by Bob London, district engineer for the DEQ Office of Drinking Water and Municipal Assistance division.

The sample frequency for each city/township is listed at three years.

It should be noted that none of the most recent samples within this system were deemed as being above the action level, which again is 15 ppb for lead and 1,300 ppb for copper.

AuSable Township: Lead, 2 ppb; copper, 580 ppb; last tested, 2013.

Baldwin Township: Lead, 2.5 ppb; copper, 155 ppb; last tested, 2015.

East Tawas: Lead, 0 ppb; copper, 310 ppb; last tested, 2014.

Oscoda Township: Lead, 5.7 ppb; copper, 525 ppb; last tested, 2013. It should be noted that these numbers have been confirmed by the DEQ, with London advising

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"The other reason is that the county now has as many as five ambulances on duty at times. Part of the reasons we are dispatched is when an ambulance is out of position. With more ambulances available, the less we are needed for that purpose.

"The decrease in medical first responder runs would have been very significant this year, except we were dispatched 21 times or 22

percent of all our medical first responder runs to the same address. Sometimes based on the number of first responders available the entire department was paged for assistance."

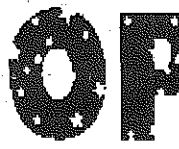
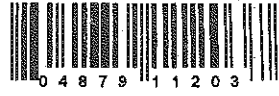
Look said in 2014, a new city ordinance to charge people for excessive emergency responses was enacted.

"The problem becomes when those people refuse or (are) unable to pay for those responses," he

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Lead

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that the 8.7 ppb lead levels reported elsewhere are not correct.

Tawas City: Lead, 2 ppb; copper, 150 ppb; last tested, 2014.

A chart was also provided by FVOP, which lists the estimated population of each municipality serviced by HSRUA, as well as the next monitoring period for each. The population figures, however, do not necessarily reflect the number of municipal water customers.

AuSable Township: Estimated population, 2,200. Next monitoring period, 2016.

Baldwin Township: Estimated population, 1,700. Next monitoring period, 2018.

East Tawas: Estimated population, 2,800. Next monitoring period, 2017.

Oscoda Township: Estimated population, 7,200. Next monitoring period, 2016.

Tawas City: Estimated population, 1,800. Next monitoring period, 2017.

As for the fluctuations in results from one area to the next, regardless of the fact that the water is treated at the same facility, London stated that there are often no obvious reasons why results vary from community to community. It could simply be a difference in the plumbing layout or fixtures at the homes which are tested.

He explained that the presence of lead is not typical in surface water throughout the state, nor in the municipal distribution systems.

Ways in which lead can seep into one's water supply is through older style service lines, sections of which can contain lead, London noted.

Outdated solder material used on interior plumbing, fittings, valves and so on, and even older faucets, can all be contributors to a rise in lead content within water, as well.

"Lead levels are primarily from the building materials, the service line components and the home plumbing - not from anything in the water treatment process," said Cath Garnham, FVOP regional manager who oversees operations

at HSRUA.

"We routinely test the corrosivity index to make sure the water chemistry is balanced," she added.

According to FVOP representatives, HSRUA uses Lake Huron as its source of raw water, which is pumped to the plant for treatment, prior to clean, plentiful water being delivered to residents.

The facility operates and maintains the entire drinking water supply system, including the source, treatment facilities and distribution system.

Representatives noted that many steps are required to ensure that customers are provided with a safe and reliable drinking water supply. This includes regularly investing in staff training on how to deliver safe drinking water and updating infrastructure to help maintain a quality system.

"I can tell you that the recent results are way below any level of concern or contamination. You can drink the water today and not worry about it," stated Selover.

"If there is lead coming from your home's piping, the EPA states that it can easily be mitigated by simply running the water for 30

seconds to two minutes," he explained. "If you let it run cold, there won't be any lead in the water. Any lead will be flushed and gone."

According to a release from FVOP, HSRUA has made it a top priority to go above and beyond when it comes to state and federal requirements to reassure residents that their local water is safe and clean.

Homeowners who may be concerned about lead content can request to have their water tested.

Additional information regarding lead in drinking water, testing methods and steps to minimize exposure is available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline by calling 800-426-4791 or visiting <http://water.epa.gov/drink/info/lead>.

According to the World Health Organization, lead is a naturally occurring toxic metal which affects multiple body systems and is particularly harmful to young children.

There is no known level of lead exposure which is considered safe and, once it enters the body, it is distributed to the brain, liver, kidneys and bones.

Saturday	10:30
Sunday	11:05
Monday	11:5
Tuesday	12:31
First	Full
Feb. 15	Feb. 22

Forecasts, graphs and data provided by ©2016, The Weather Channel



ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 19
Your sense of time management and practicality come to the fore this week, Aries. You get down to business and your no-nonsense attitude will shine through.

TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21
Taurus, this is a great time to just kick back and relax yourself without the crunch of deadlines and responsibilities. You have a few free moments to do whatever you like.

GEMINI - May 22/June 21
Something you have always wanted to do becomes possible this week. Maybe it's something from your bucket list. Bring a friend along to make the most of the fun.

PUZZLE

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