

PROTECTING YOUR COMMUNITY'S HEALTH IS JOB NUMBER ONE FOR GLWA

Sue McCormick, CEO of the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), shares insights on how GLWA treats drinking water to protect public health in this podcast.

Water treatment technology is one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th century that continues to evolve with scientific advances.

Science is an ever evolving field. Throughout history we have addressed the prevalence of diseases in water through disinfection practices. We have relied on taste, odor and color as ways to observe water with the idea that addressing these aspects would make water healthier. However, often times what we see and taste isn't what impacts public health. Research is being conducted constantly to identify elements in our environment that impact our source water. We need to know what's not being removed during the treatment process, what people are being exposed to, and how it's impacting public health. We've learned about manmade chemicals and that water treatment has to advance with it. This has taught us how to be more careful about the way we disinfect because disinfection itself can create byproducts that can impact human health. We've found trace organics in our water associated with manmade materials and have applied different treatment processes in our filters to remove them. The analytical equipment and methods that we use to measure contaminants in water has also advanced, revealing the presence of elements we didn't know were there. Now, we can measure them and take a look at how our treatment process can reduce them.

GLWA focuses on optimizing treatment processes to meet water quality standards.

Optimization starts with measuring source water quality and making sure at each water treatment plant that each unit treatment process is doing the best job and is well below any threshold requirements that the Safe Drinking Water Act requires.

Effective treatment processes and infrastructure are critical to achieving water quality requirements.

In addition to making sure daily treatment processes are effective, it is important to understand the condition of all of our equipment that supports each treatment process so they perform effectively. This is why having a capital improvement process is another big piece of what's important to ensure quality and consistency over time.

GLWA maintains optimal corrosion control to protect the public from lead and copper.

In the 1990s, we conducted a number of studies to look at how we could best protect the public from lead and copper, and identified an optimal corrosion control practice that MDEQ assisted us with. We measure a number of water quality parameters as water leaves our five water treatment plants. We maintain optimal corrosion control by using orthophosphates. Ultimately, the true test is when we go out and assist our customer communities in measuring lead and copper results in their residents' homes. What we have found over time is that those monitoring results are demonstrating exceptional protection.

The Great Lakes Water Authority strives to deliver the nation's best water and sewer services. Regional collaboration and customer partnering are the core operating principles. GLWA works hand in hand with operating staff from suburban communities and Detroit to maintain safe and reliable service.

This podcast was created as part of a series to answer the questions commonly heard throughout our service area.

