

## Statement Released by the Freshwater for Life Action Coalition

Recent remarks by Mayor Tom Barrett during a WUWM report gives rise to some questions regarding the city's handling of the 70,000 lead pipes still distributing city treated water into the homes of Milwaukee residents. The Freshwater for Life Action Coalition has been meeting with experts and city leaders regarding this hazard.

In January 2016, before the Guardian released its report citing over 30 cities, including Milwaukee, were identified as water testing "cheats" for lead in water FLAC members questioned Superintendent Carrie Lewis' statement at the January 2016 Rules and Steering committee meeting in which she gave a power point presentation indicating her department used "end of line" water testing method for lead in our water. During this same presentation the superintendent of Milwaukee Water Works (MWW) told member of the committees that residents were instructed to flush out their pipes before taking samples of water to test for lead. FLAC members have stated publicly for weeks before the Guardian article was released that "end of line", "pre-flushing" or "pre-stagnation" method of testing is unacceptable.

Running water to test for lead is not a mandated method of testing water for lead by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA guidelines were suggestive methods of testing, according to EPA officials from Region 5 Office in Chicago, which serves Wisconsin.

For over twenty years Milwaukee has added a phosphorous compound to its drinking water. The compound coats pipes to control lead corrosion, but recent concerns regarding heavy construction around the city has brought to light that this protective phosphorous compound is being loosened by the pounding of machines breaking apart sidewalks and streets in which many of these toxic lead pipes are located.

We call on the Mayor of Milwaukee to suspend construction in the city where lead laterals are concentrated, and to send city engineers to inspect if in fact the vibrations from the construction work taking place are loosening the phosphorous compound from the inner lining of these hazardous lead pipes.

We also seek from the mayor a directive ordering MWW to go to the neighborhoods impacted by the street and sidewalk construction work and test the drinking water for lead spiking caused by the heavy construction in their neighborhood.

In light of the recent Guardian report, FLAC is calling upon the Mayor of Milwaukee to test the water of homes identified as having lead lateral pipes by using "front draw" method of testing. This method of water testing takes samples from the faucet as soon as the water pours after sitting in the lead pipes for 6 hours or more.

In February 2016 the EPA released new recommendations for testing lead in our drinking water. By following the new recommended Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Guidelines regarding lead water testing the city will be undertaking a proactive approach to ensure the safety of our drinking water.

The results of the water sampling and engineering assessment should be made public immediately upon return.

In the WUWM report Mayor Barrett stated that the "city's long-term goal is to replace lead laterals whenever a main breaks or is scheduled for replacement", but he, "can't promise the solutions will come easily or cheaply – particularly for the sections on private property".

This statement is disconcerting. Lead is a toxic public health issue. The notion that lead pipes are sitting on private property therefore it's not a city matter is absurd. Much like lead paint is seen as a hazard to the health of children in private homes, lead water pipes should be obviously held to the same standard of threat to children's health.

The Mayor also stated that "under state law, we cannot use water utility resources. So the question is how do you pay for that portion and who pays for that portion"?

There are several ways in which the removal of lead lateral service pipes can be paid for, the most obvious being issuing municipal bonds. There are Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) that the city receives every year from the Federal government that could be used too. There is also the option of Mayor Barrett making the removal of lead lateral service pipes a priority of this administration and setting aside money in the City of Milwaukee budget to remove these lead lateral service pipes. Another option is a combination of all of the above. There are ways to pay for this, so that the poor of this city do not sink to the bottom of this fix.

In closing, the city cannot continue to try and place blame for our lead flawed federal standards or the state's funding. If there are "loopholes in the existing regulation that allow for compliance that may not be the veracity in terms of protecting public health", then the experts should have identified those loopholes in the past and created standards that increases the safety of our drinking water.

In addition, FLAC calls upon Mayor Barrett to initiate a comprehensive strategic removal and funding plan designed to remove these 70,000 lead pipes over using a progressive time schedule to get it done.

The City of Milwaukee cannot be considered the "Freshwater Capitol of the World" or the "Fresh Coast City", if they will not provide lead-free drinking water to the people that live in its own backyard.