

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 16, 2014

Dr. Thomas Frieden  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Dr. Frieden:

After consultation with the CDC, West Virginians were informed earlier this week that a screening level of 1 part per million of crude MCHM would be adequate to protect those consuming the water from adverse health consequences.

Based on the 1 part per million standard, state officials began to lift the Do Not Use Water order for some residents on Jan. 13. By the evening of Jan. 15, the Do Not Use order had been lifted for approximately half of customers originally impacted.

Last night, you wrote to the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources to provide additional information regarding the amount of crude MCHM that a person could safely ingest. In this Jan. 15 letter, you wrote that additional animal studies on crude MCHM had been received since the CDC's original calculations were completed and that these new studies are currently being reviewed. Your letter states that "[a]t this time" CDC continues to recommend 1 part per million as the protective level, but proceeds to express the limitations of the data available to the CDC and says that West Virginia officials exercising an abundance of caution "may wish to consider an alternative drinking water source for pregnant women until the chemical is at non-detectable levels in the water distribution system."

To date, the CDC has not detailed the methodology that served as the basis for its original recommendation that 1 part per million is an appropriate protective level for ingestion of crude MCHM. The Jan. 15 announcement that the CDC is considering new information not factored into its original determination, the acknowledged limitations in available studies, and the new advisory to pregnant women suggests that the 1 part per million threshold may not be the appropriate protective standard for everyone.

It is particularly concerning that as many as 150,000 people who had been under a Do Not Use water order were told that their water supply was safe for use before the CDC's recommendation that pregnant women should consider an alternate drinking water source. We are deeply disappointed in the CDC for recommending a screening level before receiving all relevant studies and information, which has resulted in confusion, fear and mistrust among Kanawha Valley residents.

West Virginians should know the basis for the CDC's protective standard as Do Not Use water orders are lifted in their communities. We therefore request immediate answers to the following:

- Describe in detail the methodology used by the CDC to calculate on Jan. 10 or Jan. 11 that 1 part per million is the appropriate protective standard for the ingestion of crude MCHM for the entire population. This response should include reference to the original studies consulted by the CDC in calculating the 1 part per million standard.
- What information led the CDC to suggest on Jan. 15 that pregnant women "may wish to consider an alternative drinking water source"? This response should include reference to the new studies that scientists were reviewing at the time of your Jan. 15 letter.
- When did the CDC first become concerned about the possible effects of crude MCHM levels of less than 1 part per million on pregnant women?
- You use the phrase "at this time" in your Jan. 15 letter when explaining that the CDC continues to believe that 1 part per million is the proper protective standard. Given the new advisory for pregnant women and the new studies the CDC is reviewing, how confident are you that 1 part per million will remain the protective standard for all West Virginians – including young children, those with medical conditions, and the elderly?

People must be able to have confidence that their water supply is safe for use, and that confidence has been shaken by the events of the past week. Disclosing the basis for the CDC's recommendations would be a significant step in restoring the public's trust in the safety of the Kanawha Valley's water supply. We look forward to your response by the morning of Tuesday, Jan. 21.

Sincerely,

  
Shelley Moore Capito  
Member of Congress

  
Joe Manchin, III  
United States Senator