

The Village of Chatham is committed to maintaining a high quality of life for its residents by providing municipal services that satisfy their basic needs. Among these services, nothing is more important than providing safe and reliable drinking water. In recent years, significant changes have been made to the village's water system, leading to some unforeseen issues. The village has addressed many of these issues and continues to look for ways to improve the water system, above and beyond what is required by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Background

The Village of Chatham's water customer base is comprised of approximately 15,000 residents in 5,000 households. Average water consumption is approximately 80 gallons per person, per day. Until 2012, the water was purchased from City Water, Light & Power (CWLP) in Springfield. In March of 2012, the village began purchasing water from a new water treatment plant near Buckhart, Illinois. It is operated by the South Sangamon Water Commission (SSWC), initially commissioned by the village, but now an independent utility facility.

Issues

The acquisition, treatment and distribution of water for consumption is a complicated process that is impacted by many scientific variables that must be addressed over time. The Village of Chatham went from distributing CWLP water that is drawn from a lake and treated with a lime softening and filtration process, to SSWC water that comes from the Sangamon Valley Aquifer and is treated by membrane filtration and ion exchange softening. The chemical characteristics of the two types of water are different, resulting in perceptible changes in taste and appearance. In some instances, it has led to reported increased corrosion of plumbing fixtures, and individual claims of health issues. **It should be noted that from the time the new water came online and through to the present, that water has exceeded EPA quality requirements.**

Response

The Village of Chatham appreciates the feedback provided by concerned residents. Through their diligence and our own on-going evaluation efforts, we have identified several opportunities to improve both water quality and service to our customers:

- Increased communication with the SSWC to report and document details of water quality complaints.
- Meetings with SSWC staff to discuss water quality parameters, such as phosphate and chlorine residual concentration ranges.
- Changes have been made to address the concerns of the residents and additional meetings will be held to address any future concerns.
- Follow-up with SSWC operations staff to ensure that chemical feed changes are made to the satisfaction of the village.
- Continuing compliance with IEPA regulations and recommendations. Water supplied to the village customers meets or exceeds all of the IEPA guidelines. Water is tested for lead and there is no presence in the distribution system.
- Additional sampling at individual residences in response to customer concerns regarding chlorine, copper, etc.
- Conventional and unidirectional flushing program for water mains to clear tuberculation and other deposits that have settled out over the years. Cleaning and recoating of the interior of the village's ground storage water tank.
- Engaged in the services of an independent firm to conduct an extensive leak detection survey on approximately 85 miles of village water main identifying seventeen locations of concern. Repairs resulted in a significant reduction in water loss and operating costs.
- Securing CWLP as a back-up emergency water supplier.

It is understood by the village that the switch from CWLP to SSWC as a water source resulted in some unexpected results. By increased public outreach and communication, the village continues its commitment to providing safe and reliable water to all its customers.