

# VADER-ENCHANTED VALLEY WATER SYSTEM NEWSLETTER



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## Flint Water Crisis...Can it Happen Here?

The water crisis in Flint, Michigan, highlighted several issues. One, the disastrous combination of poor management and bad decisions lead to the poisoning of the water supply (excuse the pun). Two, the regulatory measures taken to ensure this vital human need of safe potable water were missing. And three, safe and sufficient water is viewed by many of the American public as a human right.

The Flint crisis is one that drinking water regulators, administrators and operators work to avoid. Can it happen here? Lewis County and the State Department of Health are working diligently to ensure nothing like this ever happens in Vader.

Our State Department of Health (DOH) regulates our public water systems under state statutory authority to protect the health of consumers using public drinking water supplies. DOH takes this mission seriously. For example, DOH drafted a fact sheet about lead exposure in response to the Flint crisis, which is attached with this newsletter for your use.

Lewis County also share DOH's mission of protecting your health. We work to be in compliance with federal and state regulations, and manage the water system efficiently and responsibly as possible. We test for lead and copper every three years. The last test was conducted in September 2013. We use new lead-free water service meters and fittings.

Other local conditions that work in our favor are the quality of our raw water source, the lack of multiple upstream outfalls, somewhat newer water pipes and the close coordination of our work with DOH and Lewis County Health.

The crisis is terrible for the residents of Flint but it started a national conversation about the importance of ensuring that drinking water regulations are followed; listening to the users of the water system and being responsive to complaints; ensuring adequate training and accountability for staff, and being open and accountable not only to the users of the water system but to regulators as well

Erik D. Olson, head of the health and environment program at the National Resources Defense Council summarized it well: "You think our roads and bridges aren't being fixed? The stuff underground is just totally ignored. We're mostly living off the investment of our parents and grandparents for our drinking water supply."

We hope to allay your fears of whether a Flint crisis can happen here by giving you information. A short article on Flint's problems is on page 2 of this newsletter.

Lewis County takes serious our responsibility to provide safe and reliable drinking water to our customers, and it is our honor to be the stewards of your water system.

### Update on the New Reservoir

Our \$717,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the State Department of Commerce contract was approved in December 2015. The funding is for a new reservoir.

We now are in the process of selecting an engineering consultant for design engineering and construction management support services. We hope to start design this summer and start construction next spring in 2017.

**CODE RED HAS BEEN REPLACED BY  
LEWIS COUNTY ALERT! SEE  
ARTICLE ON NEXT PAGE AND  
DON'T FORGET TO SIGN UP!**

**QUARTERLY SCHEDULE SYSTEM FLUSHING:** *January-April-August-December*

*Quarterly flushes will be performed between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of scheduled months.*

**SUMMER ACTIVITY:**

*Valve Exercise and Isolation  
Valve Marking  
Vegetation Maintenance around facility*

## **The Flint Michigan Water Crisis**

As manufacturing jobs moved away from Flint and families escaped into the suburbs, Flint's tax base hollowed out. The Governor declared a state of financial emergency for Flint in 2011, when it faced \$15 million in debt. The state took budgetary control and the governor appointed an emergency manager to run the city. All decisions made about the water crisis were at the state level.

Switching water sources from Lake Huron to Flint River was intended to save money for the struggling industrial town of Flint, Michigan. The switch was supposed to be temporary until a new state-run supply line to Lake Huron was ready for connection. The switch was made in April 2014. The water started to look, smell and taste funny shortly after the switch. The contaminant was iron. The Flint River is highly corrosive, about 19 times more so than the Lake Huron supply. Yet the state Department of Environmental Quality was not treating the Flint River water with a corrosion inhibitor which was a violation of federal law. The water was eroding the iron water mains and turning the water brown.

About half of the service lines to homes in Flint are made of lead. Because the river water was not properly treated and highly corrosive, it leached lead into homes.

The City switched back to Detroit water in October 2015. Researchers still detect lead levels—lower levels—in water in Flint homes. The state is handing out filters and bottled water.

Lead poisoning is irreversible and the children who tested elevated levels will suffer lifelong consequences. It drops your IQ and affects behavior with multigenerational impacts. There are some environmental actions that can help mitigate exposure such as proper nutrition and early childhood education. That was difficult in Flint with inadequate resources.

## **CODE RED HAS BEEN REPLACED BY LEWIS COUNTY ALERT**

Recently, the old Code Red emergency alert system was replaced by Lewis County Alert.

If you received Code Red messages about water outages from us via cellphone, text, or email, you will need to sign up again with the Lewis County Alert system. If you currently have a landline phone, that number will be automatically called with the alert information.

In addition to the Vader/Enchanted Valley Water alerts you will also be notified of any emergency information that would impact you such as fires or other potential disasters. It is our goal to notify you as quickly as possible. Signing up for Lewis County Alert will help ensure that occurs.

Please refer to the website below for more information.

<http://lewiscountywa.gov/911/codered-changes-to-lewis-county-alert>