



Lake Huron - Seasonal Water Quality Advisory

August 7, 2024

Some area residents who consume water supplied by the Lake Huron Primary Water Supply System (LHPWSS) may have noticed an unusual taste or odour in their drinking water recently. Consumers sometimes describe their water as tasting or smelling earthy, musty, moldy, swampy or organic. Some people are sensitive to the taste and odour, but others may not notice it at all.

This taste and odour is caused by geosmin in the raw lake water. Geosmin is a harmless, naturally occurring organic compound which typically increases in the lake water in late summer and early fall. Geosmin is produced by bacteria, including cyanobacteria or algae in surface water. The early presence of geosmin this year may have been intensified by heavy rainfall experienced in July, and warmer water temperature.

Geosmin is harmless and there is no impact to water quality from a health perspective. The treated water supplied from the LHPWSS continues to meet the stringent water quality standards established by Ontario Regulation and remains safe to drink. The water system's contracted operating authority, the Ontario Clean Water Agency (OCWA), works diligently to ensure the treated water quality continues meet the drinking water standards; however, some consumers may notice a change in taste or odour of the water as a result of the geosmin.

Operations staff at the Lake Huron Water Treatment Plant (WTP) monitor taste and odour closely. The number of laboratory samples being collected has increased, and staff make operational adjustments as needed to address constantly changing conditions. This includes increasing the use of powder activated carbon (PAC) in the treatment process to combat any strong taste and odours associated with geosmin.

It is not possible to predict how long a taste and odour event caused by geosmin might last. Geosmin levels in the lake are expected to fluctuate in the coming weeks and months.

If consumers are sensitive to the taste and odour of their drinking water, they may want to consider putting a glass pitcher of water in the refrigerator to allow the taste and odour to dissipate with the colder temperature. Cartridge filters may also help combat the taste and odour. Geosmin is not harmful and the water remains safe to drink.

Consumers with questions or concerns about the supply of drinking water from their municipal water distribution system should contact their local municipality.

Background

The Lake Huron Water Treatment Plant (WTP) utilizes a conventional chemically-assisted sedimentation and filtration water treatment process to supply treated drinking water to approximately 400,000 people in the Municipalities of Bluewater, Lambton Shores, Middlesex Centre, North Middlesex, South Huron, Strathroy-Caradoc, Township of Lucan Biddulph, and the City of London.

On average, the Lake Huron WTP supplies about 131.5 million litres of water per day to area municipalities, with a maximum summer peak in the order of 198.5 million litres.

Raw water from Lake Huron, treatment processes, and treated drinking water supplied to area municipalities are continuously monitored using computerized analyzers. Onsite operational laboratory testing is conducted at the WTP every four hours to monitor and confirm treatment processes and water quality. Additional samples are sent to an accredited laboratory daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly to verify treatment quality and to further ensure the treated drinking water meets the Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standards.

The taste and odour of the water from Lake Huron is treated at this facility using powder activated carbon (PAC) which is added to the raw water as it enters the water treatment facility, and is subsequently removed through the sedimentation and filtration processes.

The drinking water supplied to area municipalities is disinfected using chlorine and chlorine residuals are monitored and maintained in the transmission system which supplies the area municipalities.

Additional information about the LHPWSS is available at: <https://huronelginwater.ca/>

For further information please contact: general@huronelginwater.ca