



## The City of Somerville WATER DEPARTMENT

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### CITY OF SOMERVILLE - WATER DEPARTMENT

The City of Somerville continues to inform all of its residents about the water system and how it affects their drinking water. This annual newsletter is beneficial to new customers and residents that may not be aware of how Somerville purchases its water and how it is distributed to the user.

The City of Somerville purchases all of its water from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA). The water is delivered through seven MWRA master meters into the city's distribution system. The system consists of pipes, valves, hydrants and service lines, which deliver the water to homes, businesses, and other facilities for drinking and other uses such as fire protection.

Somerville's distribution system is comprised of approximately 120 miles of water mains ranging from four inch to twenty inches in diameter. The majority of this system was installed in the late 1800's to early 1900's. The citywide metering program is 80% complete and is ahead of schedule. Customers have already benefited from the new wireless system that has the capability to notify the customer if there has been a spike in their average use, indicating there may be a leak at the property. This particular feature has been a cost savings to customers as well as reducing the amount of water wasted through household leaks.

Due to a misunderstanding with the Department of Environmental Protection, in July 2009 the Somerville Water Department violated a monitoring requirement. We are required to monitor your drinking water for specific contaminants on a regular basis. Results of regular monitoring are an indicator of whether or not our drinking water meets health standards. Somerville was investigating water quality concerns at a private building when a positive total coliform sample occurred. Somerville took repeat samples, but not as many as DEP staff required. Somerville will ensure that the appropriate water quality samples are taken in the future.

In October, 13 samples taken near the Mass Highway construction site in Union Square were positive for total coliform. We flushed the mains to resolve the problem, and all remaining samples for 2009 were clear.

The most frequently asked question that we receive about water quality concerns the potential of lead in tap water. The answer is simple: the water we supply to your home does not contain any lead. If any lead is present at the tap, it has been picked up through contact with brass fixtures or with lead elsewhere on the premises, such as lead solder used in plumbing work. Lead water services (the pipe running from the house foundation to the water main in the street) may also be a factor. However, lead has not been used for water services or in household pipes since before World War II. Although the majority of homes dating from this earlier era either never used lead or have since had their water service replaced, there are still a small number of lead services in place.

This year Somerville tested below the Lead Action Level. The city tested below the 90th percentile lead Action Level 15ppb at 7.9 ppb. The city continues to promote a Lead Service Line Replacement program and lead service lines are replaced as applicable. As part of this program, the Water Department reviews the yearly street reconstruction work before it begins to determine if the service line that is owned and controlled by the city is made of lead. With the help of an interest-free loan from MWRA's Local Pipeline Assistance Program and city funds, 190 lead services were replaced in 2009.

Additional information regarding lead in your tap water is detailed on page 5 of this brochure. The Water Department is available to answer any questions you may have regarding any water related issues at 617-625-6600, ext. 5850.

Carol Antonelli  
Water Superintendent

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