UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF WATER

NOV 03 2015

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Lead and Copper Rule Requirements for Optimal Corrosion Control Treatment for Large Drinking Water Systems

FROM: Peter C. Grevatt, Director
Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water

TO: EPA Regional Water Division Directors, Regions I-X

This memorandum addresses certain concerns raised about the application of the 1991 Lead and Copper Rule, specifically the requirements pertaining to maintenance of optimal corrosion control treatment, in situations in which a large water system ceases to purchase treated water and switches to a new drinking water source. These concerns have been raised most recently in regard to the drinking water system in Flint, Michigan, where the water system was disconnected from the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, which provided corrosion control treatment for Lake Huron source waters, and instead began distributing water from the Flint River. This type of situation rarely arises and the language of the LCR does not specifically discuss such circumstances. After reviewing the rule with our Office of General Counsel, it appears that there are differing possible interpretations of the LCR with respect to how the rule's optimal corrosion control treatment procedures apply to this situation, which may have led to some uncertainty with respect to the Flint water system. This memorandum clarifies how the LCR applies to this situation and eliminates the uncertainty for water systems and primacy agencies that may face these circumstances in the future.

It is important for large systems and primacy agencies[1] to take the steps necessary to ensure that appropriate corrosion control treatment is maintained at all times, thus ensuring that public health is protected. This memorandum focuses on those steps and clarifies, on a prospective basis, how EPA interprets the LCR corrosion control requirements and how primacy agencies should apply these requirements to large public water systems before, during and after making a significant change in source water, including switching from purchased water to a new source.

Under the LCR, all large systems (those serving more than 50,000 persons), whether purchasing water or not, must have completed a series of steps to either optimize the corrosion control treatment or be deemed to have optimal corrosion control treatment (OCCT) by 1998. 40 CFR 141.81. Key steps for

[1] The term "primacy agency" refers to the State, tribe or U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regional office having jurisdiction over, and primary enforcement responsibility for, a given public water system.

optimizing corrosion control include monitoring, corrosion control studies, installation of treatment, follow-up sampling and specification by the primacy agency of water quality parameters (WQPs) for monitoring corrosion control. The LCR requires any large system that has met the OCCT requirements through the installation of corrosion control treatment to continue operating and maintaining the treatment and to continue meeting the WQPs established by the primacy agency. 40 CFR 141.81(b) and 141.82(g). Systems deemed to have OCCT without the installation of corrosion control treatment are not subject to this requirement. However, they are required to notify the primacy agency in writing of any upcoming changes in treatment or source and request that the primacy agency modify its determination of the OCCT and WQPs applicable to the system. The primacy agency must then review and approve the change and designate OCCT and WQPs prior to its implementation by the system. 141.81(b)(3). Similarly, systems subject to reduced monitoring or monitoring waivers must notify the primacy agency of any upcoming changes in treatment or source and the primacy agency must subsequently review and approve it. EPA recommends that systems that are not subject to a notification requirement also notify the primacy agency prior to the addition of a new source or treatment and request the primacy agency to modify its determination of the optimal corrosion control and WQPs applicable to the system.

Due to the unique characteristics of each PWS (e.g., source water, existing treatment processes, distribution system materials) it is critical that public water systems, in conjunction with their primacy agencies and, if necessary, outside technical consultants, evaluate and address potential impacts resulting from treatment and/or source water changes. It is also critical for public water systems to conduct ongoing monitoring to ensure compliance with OCCT prior to, during and after a source or treatment change. The rearrangement of a system's existing configuration may trigger the need for OCCT adjustments and establishment of appropriate WQPs. Primacy agencies should work with systems that plan to disconnect from a supplier that had installed corrosion control treatment to determine the OCCT for the new source and establish WQPS for that treatment instead of using the OCCT and WQPs established for the previous source. This will allow a system that ceases to purchase treated water to stay in compliance with any applicable requirements pertaining to OCCT and ensure protection of public health during and after the change in source. EPA has developed a guidance manual[2] specifically focusing on evaluation of corrosion control treatment options and optimization of full-scale treatment to assist water systems and primacy agencies with these efforts. EPA is currently preparing an updated version of the manual, which we anticipate will be released in February 2016.

The key to identifying and mitigating potential problems is to ensure effective collaboration between the public water system and the primacy agency. Corrosion control treatment can come in many forms. For this reason, it is important to conduct a system-wide assessment prior to any source water and/or treatment modifications and to identify existing or anticipated water quality, treatment or operational issues that may interfere with or limit the effectiveness of corrosion control treatment optimization or re-optimization.

If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact me or have your staff contact Maria Lopez Carbo, Chief of the Protection Branch, in the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water, at lopez-carbo.maria@epa.gov.

---

[2] U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Lead and Copper Rule Guidance Manual, Volume II: Corrosion Control Treatment.* Office of Water. EPA 811-B-92-002. 1992. Available at: http://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi?Dockey=91019DM4.txt.