TOWN OF COLONIE

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
DIVISION OF LATHAM WATER
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Paula A. Mahan
Town Supervisor

John W. Frazer, Jr., P.E.
Superintendent

May 21, 2020

Dear Commercial Property Owner,

The "New York On Pause" order from Governor Cuomo due to COVID-19 has left many large buildings such as schools, offices, hotels, factories, and medical facilities unoccupied or under-occupied for several weeks. Lack of water use during this period results in stagnation that can allow chlorine to drop to undetectable levels. Chlorine is used in our water system to ensure that there is no re-growth of biofilms that contain *Legionella* and other potentially harmful bacteria. Long periods of stagnation in building water systems with no chlorine residual can allow the growth of harmful bacteria, and cause leaching of metals from pipes, leading to discolored water or elevated lead levels.

The Latham Water District urges facility managers at buildings that have been unoccupied or under-occupied to take action to ensure that water is safe to use when normal building use resumes. As a reminder, property owners are responsible for the maintenance of their water service lines and internal plumbing. Prior to re-occupancy, consider developing a Water Quality Mitigation Plan for your building. The following mitigation strategies could be used in developing a plan:

- Inspection of all internal water system components to ensure they are still functional and not leaking.
- Thorough flushing of both cold *and* hot water systems through every tap.
- Post flushing temperature measurement (on cold water system) to ensure stagnant water is removed. (water temperature during May should be around 50 degrees)
- Post flushing testing for free chlorine residual to ensure flushing was successful.
- Draining, cleaning and disinfecting hot water storage tanks.
- Flushing, draining, and/or cleaning of entry point treatment systems such as softeners or particulate filters.
- Bacteriological testing of some representative cold water taps used for drinking or cooking.

Every building plumbing system is unique, so it will be important to consider the design of your plumbing system when developing a mitigation plan. There are several resources available

to assist with developing a plan. Please consider using the resources below to develop a plan to ensure your building's water system is safe:

- CDC's updated building water system guidance,
- Water Research Foundation's Flushing guidance for Premise Plumbing to Avoid or Address a Drinking Water Advisory.
- The Purdue University Center for Plumbing Safety organized plumbing, water, and public health experts from across North America to complete a rapid response study that is freely available and focusses on reducing the risk of harmful water in low to no occupancy buildings, including actions that can be taken now.
- The Environmental Science, Policy & Research Institute (ESPRI) and AH Environmental Consultants, Inc. roadmap for flushing contaminants from buildings and return the plumbing system water quality back to pre-stagnation conditions. Because each building is different, flushing will need to be tailored accordingly.
- Phigenics, a company that helps facility owners and managers develop and implement comprehensive water management programs, developed a webinar on "Building Water Management During the COVID-19 Crisis" that is free to view.
- Ohio EPA 's Guidance for Premise Plumbing Water Service Restoration that "offers considerations for water service restoration to minimize risks associated with water quality degradation related to stagnant water."
- Washington State Department of Health's COVID-19 Guidance for Legionella and Building Water System Closures. The guidance focuses on reducing "pathogen and corrosion concerns that occur when there is a large drop in building water use."

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact our Water Engineer, Dan Seaver or me at 518-783-2750.

Very Truly Yours,

LATHAM WATER DISTRICT

John W. Frazer, Jr., P.E.

Superintendent

JWF:tjm