WATER CONSERVATION TIPS

The ECWA encourages water conservation. Although Lake Erie and the Niagara River are a vast source of high quality fresh water, it must not be wasted. A few simple steps will preserve this precious resource for future generations:

• Use low flow shower heads and faucets.
• Repair all leaks in your plumbing system.
• Water your lawn sparingly in early morning or late evening.
• Do only full loads of laundry and dishes.
• Wash your car with a bucket and hose with a nozzle.
• Don’t cut the lawn too short; longer grass saves water.

CRYPTOSPORIDIUM & GIARDIA ANALYSIS

Cryptosporidium and Giardia are microscopic protozoa that are widely present in the environment and to some degree in most surface water sources throughout the United States. They can cause intestinal illnesses if ingested. Symptoms of infection include nausea, diarrhea and abdominal cramps. Most healthy individuals can overcome the illnesses within a couple of weeks. However, both can be serious for people with weak immune systems. Although filtration removes Cryptosporidium, even the most commonly used filtration methods cannot guarantee 100 percent removal. Giardia is removed by a combination of filtration and disinfection.

In 2016, the ECWA analyzed a total of 24 source water samples for Giardia and Cryptosporidium as part of EPA’s Long Term 2 Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule. No Cryptosporidium or Giardia were detected in any samples.

The ECWA encourages immune compromised individuals to consult their physicians regarding appropriate precautions to avoid infection. Both protozoa must be ingested to cause disease, and they may spread through means others than drinking water. For additional information on Cryptosporidiosis or Giardiasis, please contact the Erie County Health Department at (716) 961-6800.

EPA/CDC guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by Cryptosporidium, Giardia and other microbial pathogens are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who sets and enforces drinking water standards?

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) is the main federal law that ensures the quality of your drinking water. Under the SDWA, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets standards for drinking water quality and oversees the states, localities, and water suppliers who implement those standards. In New York, the State Health Department enforces the EPA’s regulations and often makes them even more stringent.

The EPA sets standards for approximately 150 regulated contaminants in drinking water. For each of these contaminants, EPA sets a legal limit, called a maximum contaminant level (MCL). EPA regulations specify strict testing and reporting requirements for each contaminant. Water suppliers may not provide water that doesn’t meet these standards. Water that does meet these standards is safe to drink. In Erie County, the Erie County Health Department is the agency that administers and enforces these standards. Their phone number is (716) 961-6800.

Where does my water come from?

The sources of drinking water (both tap water and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and, in some cases, radioactive material, and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activities. Contaminants that may be present in source water include: microbial contaminants; inorganic contaminants; pesticides and herbicides; organic chemical contaminants; and radioactive contaminants.

In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and the EPA prescribe regulations that limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. The NYSDOH and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) set regulations that limit contaminants in bottled water, which must provide the same protection for public health.

Your water comes from two sources. The ECWA’s Sturgeon Point Treatment Plant in the Town of Evans draws water from Lake Erie to supply the southern part of Erie County and some communities in Chautauqua and Cattaraugus Counties. The Van de Water Treatment Plant in Tonawanda draws water from the Niagara River and services municipalities in northern Erie County as well as some in Genesee and Wyoming Counties. These two plants serve more than 500,000 consumers in Western New York.

How is my water treated?

Both ECWA treatment facilities use the conventional filtration method. First, raw water flows by gravity through a large intake tunnel to the raw water building. Pumps draw the water through traveling screens to prevent large objects such as driftwood and fish from entering the system. A chemical, poly-aluminum chloride, is added to the water, which causes suspended particles in the water to clump together to form floc. Floc particles settle to the bottom of large sedimentation basins. The water is filtered through layers of anthracite, sand, and gravel, to remove any remaining contaminants. Chlorine is added for disinfection to kill bacteria. Small amounts of fluoride are added to help prevent tooth decay. Caustic soda is added to stabilize the alkalinity of the water and prevent corrosion in home plumbing. Powdered activated carbon may be added in summer months to help remove unpleasant tastes and odors. Water is temporarily stored in clearwells or storage tanks before it is pumped to the public. High service pumps deliver the clean water through more than 3,574 miles of water mains to homes and businesses. The ECWA closely monitors its 38 pump stations and 38 water storage tanks to assist in the distribution process. On average, the ECWA delivered 72.4 million gallons a day in 2016 to serve more than 500,000 consumers in Western New York.

Are there contaminants in our water? Do I need to take special precautions?

Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that the water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791 or the Erie County Health Department at (716) 961-6800.

Although our drinking water met or exceeded all state and federal regulations, some people may be more vulnerable to disease causing microorganisms or pathogens in drinking water than the general population. Immuno-compromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants can be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice from their health care provider about their drinking water.

EPA/CDC guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by Cryptosporidium, Giardia and other microbial pathogens are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791.

How will I know if my water is not safe to drink?

In the unlikely event that water becomes unsafe to drink, the EPA mandates the ECWA notify its customers. Water is not safe to drink when testing reveals that contaminants in the water exceed federal or state limits for contaminant levels. If the water is not safe to drink, ECWA will alert the public through proper media channels and electronic communications that a “boil water order” has been issued, along with advice regarding measures that should be taken to protect your health.

Does ECWA add fluoride to drinking water?

Our system is one of the many drinking water systems in New York State that provides drinking water with a controlled, low level of fluoride for consumer dental health protection. According to the United States Centers for Disease Control, fluoride is very effective in preventing cavities when present in drinking water. ECWA’s target fluoride level has been reduced from 1.0 mg/L to 0.7 mg/L. To ensure that the fluoride supplement in your water provides optimal dental protection, the NYSDOH requires that the ECWA monitor fluoride levels on a daily basis. In 2016, monitoring showed fluoride levels in your water were in the optimal range 99% of the time. None of the monitoring results during fluoride addition showed fluoride at levels that approached the 2.2 mg/l maximum contaminant level (MCL).

Why is my water sometimes cloudy or “milky”?

In the winter months the water becomes colder than your home’s air temperature. When you pour cold water from the tap the water begins to warm to room temperature immediately. This rapid change in temperature causes the release of millions of tiny air bubbles which temporarily give the water a cloudy or “milky” appearance. After a few minutes the water reaches room temperature, the bubbles release their air and a cloudy glass of water will clear starting from the bottom to the top. This is normal. It does not affect the water’s quality.

How can I participate in decisions that affect drinking water quality?

Any member of the public may participate in decisions affecting their water quality. The ECWA’s Board of Commissioners ultimately makes those decisions on behalf of our customers. Board meetings take place in the board meeting room, Erie County Water Authority, 295 Main Street, Room 350, Buffalo, New York 14203. Call (716) 849-8444 or visit www.ecwa.org for updated board meeting information.
In 2016, your tap water met all federal and state drinking water standards for quality and safety.

ABOUT THE ERIE COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY

The ECWA was created in 1949 by a special act of the New York State Legislature to ensure that the people and industry of Erie County would have a safe, plentiful supply of water for the future. Since 1953, the ECWA has produced and reliably delivered water of the highest quality to its customers at an affordable rate.

As an independent public-benefit corporation, ECWA is not an agency of New York State and is totally independent of Erie County government. ECWA operates as a financially self-sustaining public utility and pays all operating expenses from revenues generated by the sale of water to its 169,297 customers.

In 2016, the ECWA produced approximately 26.5 billion gallons of high-quality water for residential, commercial, and industrial use in 35 municipalities throughout Western New York. Some of this was unmetered water (33.2%) used for flushing water mains, fighting fires, training firefighters, filter backwashing, plant processes, equipment and hydrant testing and lost to leaks. Approximately 17.7 billion gallons were sold to our customers.

The ECWA owns and operates two water treatment plants, a nationally recognized Department of Water Quality, 38 pump stations, 38 water storage tanks and maintains 3,574 miles of water mains, 19,262 fire hydrants, 35,608 valves and numerous appurtenances.

The cost per thousand gallons of water for residential customers was $3.17 in 2016. The average customer who used 18,750 gallons of water per quarter paid a total of $316.35 in 2016, or about 87 cents per day, to be provided with a plentiful supply of safe, high quality drinking water.

IMPROVEMENTS TO YOUR WATER SYSTEM

In 2016 the Authority invested more than $19.88 million in system-wide infrastructure upgrades, including:

- $5.8 million on water mains, hydrants, and service connection replacements in Amherst and Cheektowaga.
- $2.1 million on system-wide water meter replacements.
- Continued ongoing inspections of water storage tanks in our distribution system.
- Refurbishing and painting of the Van de Water Treatment Plant holding tank and the rehabilitation of the Veteran’s Park water tank in Tonawanda.
- $3.4 million on the construction of a new 4.2 million gallon storage tank at Ball Pump Station in Amherst.
- $2.7 million on a complete rehabilitation of the Pine Hill Pump Station. In addition to meeting the daily pumping needs of the distribution system, the station has a connection to the City of Buffalo which can be used to supplement the Authority’s water supply, if needed, during an emergency.

ECWA’S TEST RESULTS FOR 2016

The ECWA’s water system operated under “NO VARIANCE OR EXEMPTION” from any federal or state regulatory requirements. To comply with EPA mandated requirements, water quality data tables of detected regulated and unregulated contaminants are detailed in this report. The tables summarize test results for the past year or from the most recent year that tests were conducted in accordance with regulatory requirements. They also list the maximum contaminant levels (MCL). The EPA is responsible for establishing the MCL standards. Some tests are not required to be performed on an annual basis. For your convenience, important terms and abbreviations are defined throughout this document. More information regarding all substances tested for, but not detected, can be obtained upon request from the ECWA Department of Water Quality by calling (716) 685-8580 or at www.ecwa.org.

Dear Customer,

We are pleased to provide you with the ECWA’s 2016 Annual Water Quality Report (AWQR). Included are details about where your water comes from, how your water is treated and tested, and how it compares to standards set by regulatory agencies. This report fulfills the United States Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) requirement to prepare and deliver a Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) and the New York State Department of Health’s (DOH) requirement to prepare and deliver an annual water quality report.

Each year, ECWA delivers on our promise to supply customers with safe, high quality drinking water and professional service that they deserve. To ensure that we meet our commitments, we maintain a rigorous quality control program through constant monitoring and testing and continue to invest substantial financial resources to improve our two treatment plants, distribution system infrastructure, our nationally recognized department of water quality and laboratory facilities.

ECWA continues to position itself to achieve our mission of providing a plentiful supply of safe, high quality, affordable drinking water through a reliable infrastructure to the more than 500,000 consumers that rely on us 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Thank you for allowing the Erie County Water Authority (ECWA) to supply you with the high quality drinking water that you deserve. We are committed to not only providing you with an excellent product and reliable service, but also affording you with detailed information about the drinking water you consume and use every day.

We appreciate you taking the time to learn about your water supply. We believe that well-informed customers are our best allies in supporting the improvements necessary to maintain high quality drinking water. You can learn more about the quality of your water and ECWA’s mission at www.ecwa.org.

If you have comments or questions about your 2016 Annual Water Quality Report, please submit them by e-mail to questionscomments@ecwa.org.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Earl L. Jann Jr., Chairman
Jerome D. Schad, Vice-Chairman
Jerome D. Schad, Vice-Chairman
Robert Anderson, Treasurer
ERIE COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY

2016 Annual Water Quality Report

New York State Department of Health Water Source Water Assessment

The New York State Department of Health completed a draft Source Water Assessment of the supply’s raw water sources under the State’s Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP). The purpose of this program is to provide information about the possible, and actual threats to the quality of public water supply (PWS) sources. It is important to note that this assessment is for understanding the different threats that water sources may be impacted by contamination. These reports do not address the safety or quality of treated finished potable tap water. The Great Lakes’ watershed is exceptionally large and too large to be assessed in SWAP’s 5-year cycle. Source Water Analysis reports are for specific contaminants and the results do not necessarily represent a complete assessment of all contaminants. The data presented may not be representative of all drinking water sources.

Cryptopodium and Giardia

Cryptopodium is a microscopic pathogen found in surface waters throughout the United States, as a result of animal waste runoff. It can cause acute intestinal diarrhea, diarrhoea, nausea, and abdominal cramps if ingested. Our filtration process effectively removes Cryptopodium from the treated water. Giardia is a microscopical pathogen present in varying concentrations in many surface waters. Giardia is removed/destroyed through combination of filtration and disinfection or by disinfection alone. No Giardia was detected in any samples tested in 2016.

Untreated Sources

As you can see by the tables, our system had no violations. We have learned through the examination of some contaminants that were detected; however, these contaminant analyses were below the levels allowed by the state.}

For a large-print copy of ECWA’s 2016 Annual Water Quality Report, please visit www.ecwa.org or email your request to questionscomments@ecwa.org.