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LANSING



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TO: Community Water Systems Using Conventional Water Treatment or Direct Filtration Water Treatment

FROM: Eric Oswald, Director *EO 30 Nov 17*
Drinking Water and Municipal Assistance Division

DATE: December 1, 2017

SUBJECT: State of Michigan Participation in the Area Wide Optimization Program (AWOP)

For many years, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) community drinking water program has promoted the concept of optimizing water quality through our sanitary survey process. For example, in May 1995, following the Milwaukee *Cryptosporidium* outbreak, the DEQ utilized the input of state drinking water stakeholders to issue a memo to all communities treating surface water or ground water under direct influence of surface water (GWUDI) encouraging, "Recommended Practices for Treatment Optimization." These recommendations are still frequently referenced in and attached to sanitary surveys. You may also be familiar with or participate in the Partnership for Safe Water whose goal is to protect public health by working together to optimize water system operations.

In the spirit of advancing public health protection by optimizing water treatment and operation, the DEQ attended the national AWOP meeting in 2017. Since its inception approximately 20 years ago, about half of the states in the nation have participated in AWOP. The program offers a formal strategy to target higher risk systems for state assistance to maximize public health protection and includes three main components: enhanced surveillance of public water system performance; strategically targeted technical assistance and training activities; and collaboration among a network of participating states. The program is voluntary for states and is managed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Technical Support Unit in Cincinnati, Ohio, with support from four EPA regional offices and the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators (ASDWA). The AWOP National Optimization Leadership Team (NOLT) develops the program optimization goals. These goals originally focused on microbial (turbidity) water quality, but have expanded to include disinfection byproduct control and distribution water quality.

Based on the program meeting information and testimonials from other states, the DEQ is convinced AWOP will provide many direct benefits to the state and community water supplies. In addition to protecting public health, the benefits include: a reduction in noncompliance; increased access to technical training for state and water supply staff; increased communication and networking opportunities; a better understanding of water facility operation to enhance performance (without major capital improvements); recognition opportunities for high performing systems; and improved public confidence.

Therefore, the state of Michigan is hereby informing water systems of our decision to participate in AWOP.

How will this impact your water system and what happens next?

To implement the initial phase, systems will be encouraged to enhance plant performance monitoring, reporting, and documentation. The DEQ may also adjust the content and level of detail sought during the sanitary survey process, expand operator training opportunities, and emphasize optimization during water treatment plant design plan review. Participating states are expected to adopt the goals set by the NOLT. As such, you are encouraged to become familiar with the enclosed list of current optimization goals. DEQ's prioritization and implementation of the goals will be based primarily on public health risk.

We are looking forward to the opportunities and tools this program offers and ask for your cooperation as we move forward. More information can be found at www.asdwa.org/area-wide-optimization-program-awop/. If you have questions please contact Michael Bolf, Water Treatment Specialist at 906-630-4107 or bolfm@michigan.gov.