JASPER-TROUPSBURG CENTRAL SCHOOL
JASPER, NEW YORK 14855

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01/18/08

PUBLIC HEALTH NOTICE
JASPER-TROUPSBURG HIGH SCHOOL
WATER SUPPLY

The High School Water Supply Has Levels of Bromomethane Above Drinking Water Standards.

Our water system recently violated a drinking water standard. Although this is not an emergency, this notice is being provided to make you aware of what happened and what we are doing to correct this situation. We routinely monitor for the presence of drinking water contaminates. Testing results for samples collected on November 5, 20, and 26, 2007 show that our system exceeds the drinking water standard, or maximum contaminant level (MCL), for bromomethane. The standard for bromomethane is 5 micrograms per liter (ug/L). The average concentration in the three samples was 9.2 ug/L.

What should I do?

You do not need to do anything at this time. This note is being provided so that you are aware of the issues. Jasper-Troupsburg Central School will be providing spring water units as a precautionary measure for faculty/staff/students.

What is bromomethane and where might it come from?

Bromomethane (also called methyl bromide) is a colorless gas with very little odor. Bromomethane is produced for use as a fumigant to kill insects in crops, soil and buildings. It is also used to manufacture other industrial chemicals. In the past, it was used in some fire extinguishers and as a refrigerant. Bromomethane has been known to get into drinking water through improper use of disposal of products containing this chemical. There is some evidence that low levels of bromomethane may form in drinking water as a result of disinfection (e.g., chlorination).

What are the health risks with the levels of bromomethane found in the school water?

The level of bromomethane does not pose an immediate health threat. Long-term exposure to bromomethane at the highest concentration detected in the drinking water is estimated to pose a low risk for adverse health effects. If we assume that an average adult drinks two liters of the water every day, the resulting exposure is about 9000 times lower than the level of bromomethane exposure that is known to cause adverse effects on the stomach in laboratory animals. The actual exposure is probably lower because most people drink less than two liters of water per day at the school, and people attend school for only five days per week and nine months per year.

What are the next steps?

The School District will be retaining a professional consultant to investigate the source(s) of the contamination and to evaluate appropriate water treatment techniques. The State Health Department will be working with us and our consultant to resolve this problem and will be providing water quality testing to assist in the investigative/evaluative efforts. We will keep you informed as the investigation progresses.

If you have questions, please contact Lynn Wheaton at 792-3675 or Tomas Klaseus at the State Health Department at 324-8371.