



THE CITY OF LAKE JACKSON

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NEWS RELEASE

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Lake Jackson, Texas

City of Lake Jackson water distribution system tests negative for ameba

Lake Jackson, Tx – City of Lake Jackson announced today that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that the city's water system tested negative for the *Naegleria fowleri* ameba after they completed sample testing at 15 sites last week.

The determination means the aggressive high-chlorine disinfection process that residents are experiencing will end soon. On Monday, Dec. 14, the City will start the transition back to the regular monochloramine disinfectant and chlorine residual levels.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality will have staff on-site to assist with the conversion process and provide training to City staff. During the weekend, the state will prepare equipment and facilities in preparation for the transition.

Mayor Gerald Roznovsky said he hopes the CDC's findings will help residents feel comfortable that they can safely drink, bath and swim in water that the City provides.

“We know this has been a trying time for our community and we appreciate everyone's patience while the city worked in accordance with guidelines and steps outlined by the CDC and TCEQ,” he said. “Once again, our community really came together to help each other and stepped up when needed. I sincerely hope the negative test results provided by the CDC brings reassurance to our residents that they can trust our water, and that the City is committed to providing sustainably clean, safe and healthy water to everyone.”

The effort to continually improve the City's water quality will not end.

“We are going to provide continued monitoring to mitigate the risk for our citizens of harmful exposure to any organism or bacteria in the future,” City Manager Modesto Mundo said.

City water exceeds state’s clean water disinfection standards

The negative ameba test results came after the City maintained a disinfectant (free chlorine) residual level more than twice the state standards for more than two months.

The City began the remediation measure after the CDC reported preliminarily positive results of *Naegleria fowleri* DNA in samples collected from a backyard hose bib, the city splash pad storage tank, and a fire hydrant.

This ameba is a naturally occurring environmental microbe in fresh water and soil sources but infection from it is rare. In the United States, 34 infections have been reported from 2010 to 2019. At the current time, City officials know of no other exposures within the city limits.

The CDC has stated that disinfecting water is the most effective way to lower the chance of harmful exposure from the ameba. Since *Naegleria fowleri* infects people when water containing the ameba enters the body through the nasal cavity, the CDC states it is critical to prevent untreated water from going up the nose. A person cannot get a *Naegleria fowleri* infection by drinking water.

Implementing best practices

During this conversion process, the City worked with HR Green Engineering to review and improve existing processes. Specifically, we have installed new flushers in locations with high water age that provide feedback and monitor chlorine levels.

New multiparameter testing equipment has been purchased for the distribution personnel that allows more testing on location. A new work order system has been put in place to allow streamlined responses and tracking of system history. The City hired another engineering firm to complete a water model of our entire system.

Longer term upgrades to the system that are under review include adding mixers to the ground storage and elevated storage tanks. The City is also preparing plans to upgrade the chemical storage building and equipment at the Beechwood water production facility.

Since remediation began, the City enhanced its work order tracking program to mitigate problems more efficiently. The City's water management practices are being collated into a standard operating procedure manual. The new manual will include best practices for operation, maintenance, conversions, action plans, and site testing.

"We will continue these efforts as we begin exploring and implementing the long-term plan to upgrade and maintain the integrity distribution system," Mundo said.

To ensure water quality moving forward, City staff will continue to test locations in an increased manner to document baseline sample results to refer to. Reports to the state will also increase, Mundo said.

Education has also been enhanced since mid-November. The state trained staff about advanced flushing procedures and the administration of monochloramine dosages. Staff also attended training for customer service inspections to help them identify cross connection and backflow hazards at residential and commercial buildings.

Through a local donation from BASF, the City was able to purchase and distribute two water bib vacuum breakers to every residential home in Lake Jackson. The City hopes the vacuum breakers will mitigate the most-common hazard observed during the 1,500 sample inspections that workers completed.

New water system sampling and monitoring procedures are being implemented as well. For example, a new water system model will help staff predict and optimize water system operations for quality and pressure. The City has also budgeted funds for a water risk analysis to determine how to recognize and mitigate long term risks and plan for emergency response related disasters.

"Our goal is to restore our citizen's confidence in the Lake Jackson water system," Mundo said.

*For more information about the City of Lake Jackson's Healthy Water Campaign visit the City's website at <https://www.lakejackson-tx.gov/738/Healthy-Water-The-Community-Response>.
For more information on Naegleria fowleri visit the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/naegleria/index.html>*

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