

# WATER QUALITY QUESTIONS ANSWERED



## Chemicals in Water

### Lead

Lead in drinking water generally comes from the pipes or plumbing rather than the drinking water source. Water that is the slightest bit corrosive can leach lead out of pipes or plumbing into drinking water. In the 19th century and first half of the 20th century, lead was commonly used for pipe material, especially the service line from the water main to the house. Lead was also widely used in paint and gasoline. Lead piping was banned in 1986, and in 1991, the EPA began regulating lead levels in drinking water. Most of BJWSA's system is relatively new and built of ductile iron or plastic pipe. If we find a lead service line or lead fitting in the older parts of our system, we immediately replace it.

BJWSA employs treatment processes to prevent lead or copper from reaching drinking water. At our treatment plants, we feed a corrosion control product. This product forms a coating on the interior of the pipe to prevent the leaching of lead into drinking water from the pipe or plumbing. We use a product best suited to our water. BJWSA feeds this corrosion control product continuously and measures the quantity daily to ensure its proper use. The absence of a corrosion control chemical caused many of the well-documented lead problems in Flint, Michigan, that you likely heard about. BJWSA also controls and monitors pH, the acidity of water, to further ensure the water is non-corrosive.

BJWSA is in compliance with all state and federal regulations including the Lead and Copper Rule. Our water is adequately disinfected, and a disinfectant residual is maintained throughout the distribution system to ensure water stays safe all the way to your house. SCDHEC inspects BJWSA annually and reviews our water quality data monthly. BJWSA interacts with SCDHEC regularly on a variety of topics. The regulators in Columbia are diligent and paying close attention to what BJWSA does. SCDHEC's priority is always public health.

Lead is a dangerous substance, particularly for children. What happened in Flint and other places where customers were exposed to high levels of lead and other water quality problems, was tragic and terrible.

These failures broke trust and compromised people's health. BJWSA's mission is to inspire trust and enhance public health. We do not skimp or take shortcuts when it comes to safety or public health.

BJWSA's operators work 24/7 to ensure the safety of drinking water. We take customer questions and complaints seriously and respond quickly. Most BJWSA employees are also BJWSA customers. We drink the water we make, and so do our families. We will not let what happened in Flint happen here.

### Tritium

Tritium is a radioactive isotope of hydrogen. It is present in our water source, the Savannah River, as a result of natural processes in the atmosphere, fallout from past atmospheric nuclear weapons tests and the operation of the Savannah River Site (SRS). The SRS stopped making nuclear materials and is now only stabilizing nuclear waste. Consequently, tritium levels in the river have been declining.

SCDHEC monitors the Savannah River and our drinking water for tritium. BJWSA reports the findings every year in our Water Quality Report. In 2018, weekly testing showed tritium at 456 pCi/L in the Savannah River, well below the EPA's maximum contaminant level of 20,000 pCi/L.

### Other chemicals

If you have a question or concern about a specific chemical, please check our annual Water Quality Report, or call us at 843-987-9200.



**Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority**  
*Inspire trust and enhance public health.*