



Ensuring Safe Drinking Water for Las Cruces

By Suzanne Michaels

You probably have heard about the water crisis in Flint, Michigan (Flint)...and you may have questions about the safety of our drinking water in Las Cruces.



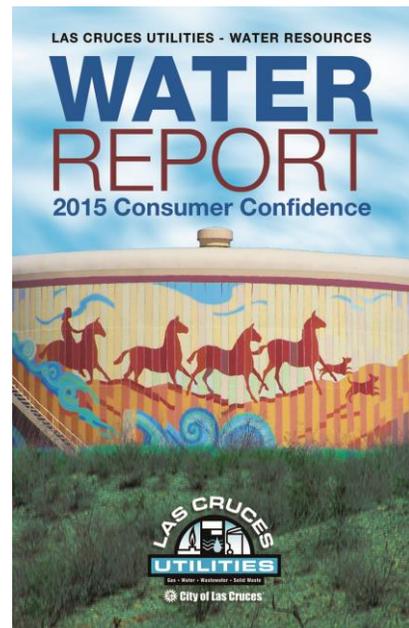
Our drinking water comes from stable, reliable groundwater resources – the Mesilla Bolson and the Jornada Bolson. Additionally, the Las Cruces Utilities (LCU) infrastructure that brings drinking water to the community is a much younger and modern system compared to older, industrial cities.

Today the Safe Drinking Water Act requires LCU to conduct lead and copper drinking water sampling every 3-years from 50 sites throughout the system, which must include structures built between 1983 through 1985. Testing from the water taps of these buildings (and not the system) provides additional protection to the occupants, in the event of any detection of lead and copper above human health standards.

The most current analysis results are published every year by LCU in the Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) and mailed to every home in Las Cruces. You can also review all the most recent CCRs at <http://www.las-cruces.org/departments/utilities>.

Contamination in community water systems is primarily due to lead and copper materials used historically in water system pipelines constructed prior to 1991 when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) adopted the **Lead and Copper Rule (LCR)**. The LCR established maximum limits, sampling methods, and monitoring programs to safeguard public health from the effects of residual amounts of lead and copper in community water supply systems.

If you look at the LCU 2015 CCR you will see the LCR readings listed under “Lead and Copper Rule” in ppb (parts per billion). An “action level” is the level where a water system is supposed to start replacing pipe or taking other corrective measures. The “90th percentile” has been



determined as a constant, valid measuring point for copper and lead. The problem in Flint is the high lead values leaching from the system and household plumbing.

Lead numbers from tap water in Las Cruces :			
Lead	Action Level: 15	90th Percentile: 8.6	Violations: NONE
Lead numbers from tap water in Flint (according to FlintWaterStudy.org):			
Lead	Action Level: 15	90th Percentile: 25	

Flint is an old and very large industrial city with an extensive amount of old infrastructure, which includes lead and copper piping still present in the system and in many older homes. When the source water for the city was changed from Lake Huron to the Flint River in 2014, anti-corrosion processes were not modified sufficiently to keep lead and copper levels at the appropriate health care parameters.

Take a look at the Consumer Confidence Report; it is sent to you every year so you will know our water is safe. If you have additional questions please contact Joshua Rosenblatt, Regulatory and Environmental Analyst, at (575) 528-3704.

You can reach Las Cruces Utilities at 528-3500 from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Las Cruces Utilities provides GAS – WATER – WASTEWATER – SOLID WASTE services to approximately 100,000 Las Cruces area residents.

CAPTIONS

Photo 1: Fresh water from the Jornada Bolson during the drilling of a LCU deep well. Our water sources are stable and reliable groundwater aquifers.

Photo 2: The CCR is published with the latest numbers and mailed to every household in Las Cruces every summer. Please review the report, also available online at <http://www.las-cruces.org/departments/utilities>.