The Erie County Water Authority (ECWA) is committed to providing you with the highest quality drinking water. Our staff is dedicated to ensuring that the water you use is safe and reliable. In this report, we provide information about our water system and the steps we take to maintain its quality.

Service Area

The ECWA serves a portion of the southern part of Erie County and some communities in Chautauqua and Cattaraugus County. The Van de Water Treatment Plant in Tonawanda is the heart of the ECWA’s water treatment system.

Conservation Tips

Except for the air we breathe, water is the single most important element in our lives. It’s too precious to waste. In an effort to make the most efficient use of our water resources, the ECWA encourages customers to practice the following water conservation measures to preserve our most precious resource:

- Use the clothes washer for full loads only.
- Instead of letting the water run in the sink when you want a cold drink, keep a jug or pitcher in the refrigerator.
- Turn the faucet off while brushing your teeth.
- Check your toilet for leaks by putting a few drops of food coloring in the tank. If the color shows up in your toilet bowl without flushing, you have a leak that is costing you money and wasting water.
- Check every faucet in your home for leaks. Just a slow drip can waste 20 gallons a day.
- Sweep outside with a broom, not a hose.
- Only water your lawn when necessary. If the grass springs back after you step on it, then it does not need to be watered.

Questions?

If you would like additional copies of this report, please contact the Public Affairs Office at (716)849-8406 or email info@ecwa.org.

Thank you for allowing the ECWA to continue to provide you with quality drinking water. We encourage you to contact us if you have any questions or concerns about your water supply.

2008 System Improvements

In 2008, the ECWA invested over $33 million into improvements to its water system. This included the ongoing reconstruction of the Van de Water Treatment Plant and Ball Pumping Station; the replacement of numerous, large system valves; the purchase of additional standby power generators for our secondary and remote facilities; and water quality improvements. Water Quality improvements were implemented in the towns of Cheektowaga, Clarence, Lancaster, the Village of Depew, and the Cities of Lockport and Tonawanda.

The ECWA continues to work on improving its system wide improvement program with an additional $25 million capital spending plan included in the 2009 Budget.
Dear Customer,

For 2008, your tap water met all State drinking water health standards. We are proud to report that our system did not violate a maximum contaminated level or any other water quality standard.

The Erie County Water Authority (ECWA) is committed to providing its customers safe, high quality drinking water. That is why the ECWA maintains a rigorous quality control program and continues to invest substantial financial resources to improve our two treatment facilities, distribution systems and nationally recognized water quality lab. Our water is constantly monitored and tested. Each year ECWA strives to provide its customers with the high quality drinking water that they deserve.

As we enter a new year, the ECWA has positioned itself to continue to achieve its mission of providing a high-quality product and reliable, cost-effective service at an affordable rate. The ECWA’s 2008 Annual Water Quality Report (AWQR) provides an overview of the ECWA’s water quality during the past year. It shows the source of your water, how it compares to standard regulations set by regulatory agencies, how your water is treated and tested, discusses ECWA programs to improve your water quality and answers common questions asked by our customers.

In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, the State and the EPA prescribe regulations which limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. The State Health Department’s and the EPA’s regulations establish limits for contaminants in bottled water which must provide the same protection for public health.

Your water comes from two sources. The ECWA’s Sturgeon Point Treatment Plant in the Town of Evans draws water from Lake Erie to supply the residents of Western New York. Your comments and suggestions are welcomed and appreciated.
Are there contaminants in our water? Do I need to take special precautions?

It should be noted that all drinking water, including bottled drinking water, may reasonably be expected to contain some amount of contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the EPA’s Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800-426-4791) or visiting www.epa.gov/safewater.

Although our drinking water met or exceeded state and federal regulations, some people may be more vulnerable to certain contaminants. Certain people, such as infants, some older adults, and those with weakened immune systems, may be at a higher risk for certain health effects. Small amounts of certain contaminants, called disinfection by-products, are often formed when water is disinfected using chlorine or other similar disinfectants. These contaminants do not contain harmful chemicals themselves, but they are formed from some chemicals that are naturally present in water or that enter water during treatment. We are required to monitor for these disinfection by-products to ensure that they are not harmful to your health. Your drinking water meets or exceeds state and federal standards for these contaminants.

The ECWA conducts more than 70,000 tests annually to make sure that your drinking water is safe. We carefully monitor our water systems for any changes in the quality of our water. Our professional Water Quality Analysts monitor fluoride levels on a daily basis. During the addition of fluoride in the month of October, November and December. None of the monitoring results during these months exceeded the action level at levels that approached the 2.2 mg/L of fluoride.

Fluoride

Our water system is one of the many drinking water systems in New York State that provide drinking water with a controlled, low level of fluoride for consumer dental health protection. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, a level of fluoride is very effective in preventing cavities when present in drinking water at an optimal range of 0.8 to 1.2 mg/L (parts per million). To ensure that the fluoride supplement in your water provides optimal dental protection, the New York State Department of Health requires that the Erie County Water Authority monitor fluoride levels on a daily basis. During the addition of fluoride in 2008, monitoring showed 5.0 pCi/liter in your water system at the optimal range 100% of the time. However, due to supply issues, the fluoride addition program was not in place in your water system in the months of August, October and November. None of the monitoring results during these months exceeded the action level at levels that approached the 2.2 mg/L of fluoride. The ECWA encourages everyone to consult their physician and monitor for any symptoms suggesting exposure to dental health fluoride. Our professional Water Quality Analysts monitor fluoride levels on a daily basis. None of the monitoring results during these months exceeded the action level at levels that approached the 2.2 mg/L of fluoride.

Who Is Responsible for Making Sure It’s Safe?

The ECWA’s Water Quality Laboratory is recognized as one of the few laboratories in North America that is capable of testing for Giardia and Cryptosporidium. In fact, our lab was one of the first labs in the country to gain EPA approval for the analysis of Cryptosporidium and Giardia, and continues to participate in the EPA’s Laboratory Quality Assurance Evaluation Program for the analysis of Cryptosporidium. The ECWA also tests for these parameters for other major public water supplies throughout the country.

These microscopists: protozoa are widely present in the environment and most surface water sources throughout the United States. They can cause minimal illness if ingested. Symptoms of infection include nausea, diarrhea and abdominal cramps. Most healthy individuals can overcome the illnesses within a couple of weeks. However, both can be serious for people with weak immune systems such as those undergoing chemotherapy, dialysis or transplant patients and people with Crohn’s disease or HIV infection.

In 2008, the ECWA analyzed 42 water samples for Giardia and Cryptosporidium. No positive samples were detected in the ECWA’s treated water supply. Giardia were found to be present in our source water. Specific test results are listed in the table below.

The ECWA tests for Cryptosporidium and Giardia as part of its routine quality assurance program. Testing for these parameters is important to the health of the community. Contact the Erie County Health Department at (716) 858-6189 for further information.

Testing for Giardia and Cryptosporidium is also required by the New York State Department of Health. The ECWA monitors for these two protozoa at each phase of the treatment process. Our professional Water Quality Analysts perform daily tests for Cryptosporidium and Giardia, and monitor for any symptoms suggesting exposure to these pathogens. The ECWA’s Water Quality Laboratory is recognized as one of the few laboratories in North America that is capable of testing for Cryptosporidium and Giardia. In fact, our lab was one of the first labs in the country to gain EPA approval for the analysis of Cryptosporidium and Giardia, and continues to participate in the EPA’s Laboratory Quality Assurance Evaluation Program for the analysis of Cryptosporidium. The ECWA also tests for these parameters for other major public water supplies throughout the country.

Cryptosporidium and Giardia Analysis?

Giardia and Cryptosporidium are protozoa that are found in surface waters throughout the United States. They are most commonly found in body of water that have been contaminated by animal waste. They can cause abdominal pain, nausea, diarrhea, and vomiting in infected people. Both protozoa must be ingested to cause disease, and they may spread through other means than drinking water. The ECWA tests for Cryptosporidium and Giardia as part of its routine quality assurance program. Testing for these parameters is important to the health of the community. Contact the Erie County Health Department at (716) 858-6189 for further information.

How Is My Water Treated? How Is My Water Tested and Who Is Responsible for Making Sure It’s Safe?

The ECWA’s two water treatment facilities use the conventional filtration method. At the plants, water undergoes the following treatment steps:

• Raw water flows through a large intake tunnel into the raw water building.
• Pumps draw the water through traveling screens to prevent large objects such as debris and fish from entering the system.
• A chemical, polyaluminum chloride, is added to the water, which causes suspended particles in the water to clump together into large floc.
• Floc particles then settle to the bottom of the large sedimentation basins.
• The water is filtered through layers of anthracite, sand, and gravel, to remove any remaining particles.
• Chlorine and fluoride are added to the water, to prevent the growth of bacteria. Additional amounts of fluoride are added to help prevent tooth decay.
• Counters is used to stabilize the alakinity of the water and prevent corrosion in home plumbing.
• Pressurized activated carbon is added in summer months to help remove unpleasant tastes and odors.
• Water is temporarily stored in storage tanks or storage basins before it is pumped to the public.
• High-pressure pumps deliver the clean water through more than 5,380 miles of pipes to homes and businesses. The ECWA closely monitors 38 pump stations and 40 water storage tanks to assist in the distribution process. On average, the ECWA delivers 69 million gallons a day to customers.

The system’s water treatment facilities are designed to meet the needs of both the City of Buffalo and the Town of Tonawanda. The system is capable of treating a variety of raw waters that are supplied to the treatment plants. The treated water is then distributed throughout the city.

The ECWA’s Water Quality Laboratory is recognized as one of the few laboratories in North America that is capable of testing for Giardia and Cryptosporidium. In fact, our lab was one of the first labs in the country to gain EPA approval for the analysis of Cryptosporidium and Giardia, and continues to participate in the EPA’s Laboratory Quality Assurance Evaluation Program for the analysis of Cryptosporidium. The ECWA also tests for these parameters for other major public water supplies throughout the country.

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The Partnership for Safewater visit www.awwa.org/science/partnership. The seal of the Partnership for Safewater as seen on this document means the ECWA operates its water treatment plant to meet federal drinking water standards. The logo is a symbol of the Partnership for Safewater and is used as a mark of distinction for the ECWA to the New York State Department of Health Source Water Assessment.

Fluoride

The ECWA’s water system operates under "NO VARIANCE OR EXEMPTION" from any federal or state regulatory requirements. To comply with EPA mandated requirements, water quality data tables of detected regulated and unregulated contaminants, are provided in the report. The tables summarize test results for the past five years, with the most recent year’s results being tested in accordance with regulatory requirements. They also list the maximum contaminant levels (MCLs). The EPA is responsible for establishing the MCLs. For your convenience, important terms and definitions are defined throughout this document.

More information regarding all substances tested for, but not detected, can be obtained by calling the Customer Service Department at 800-426-4791.

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How Is My Water Treated?

The ECWA’s two water treatment facilities use the conventional filtration method. All plants undergo the following treatment steps:

- Basic filters flow by gravity through a large intake tunnel to the raw water building.
- Pump draws the water through traveling screens to prevent large objects such as dirt and fish from entering the system.
- A chemical, polyaluminum chloride, is added to the water, which causes suspended particles in the water to clump together to form floc.
- Floc particles then settle to the bottom of the large sedimentation basins.
- The water is filtered through layers of anthracite, sand, and gravel, to remove any remaining particles.
- Chlorine is added prior to disinfection to kill bacteria. Small amounts of fluoride are added to help prevent tooth decay.
- Counts tests are added to stabilize the alkalinity of the water and prevent corrosion in home plumbing.
- Premixed activated carbon is added in summer months to help remove unpleasant tastes and colors.
- Water is temporarily stored in reservoirs or storage tanks before it is pumped to the public.
- High service pumps deliver the clean water through more than 300 miles of pipeline to homes and businesses. The ECWA closely monitors its 33 pump stations and 45 storage tanks to assure its distribution process. On average, the ECWA delivers 69 million gallons a day to customers.

Are there contaminants in our water? Do I need to take special precautions?

It should be noted that all drinking water, including bottled drinking water, may be reasonably expected to contain low levels of certain contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not indicate that water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the EPA’s Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800-426-4791).

Fluoride

Our water system is one of the many drinking water systems in New York State that provides drinking water with a controlled, low level of fluoride for consumer dental health protection. According to the United States Centers for Disease Control, fluoride is very effective in preventing cavities when present in drinking water at an optimal range of 0.8 - 1.2 mg/L (parts per million). To ensure that the fluoride supplement in your water provides optimal dental benefit, the New York State Department of Health requires that the Erie County Water Authority monitor fluoride levels on a daily basis. During the addition of fluoride in 2006, monthly samples of 38 mg/L in your water sample (1.2 mg/L) in 2006. Due to supply issues, the fluoride addition was suspended in February and March of 2007. For more detailed information, you can visit fluoride levels at the Erie County Water Authority website.

How Is My Water Tested and Who Is Responsible for Making Sure It’s Safe?

The ECWA conducts more than 70,000 tests annually to make sure all federal and state drinking water regulations are met. Our water is treated 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to assure the delivery of safe, clean water to every customer’s tap. The ECWA operates three New York State-certified laboratories, one located at each of the three water treatment plants and a nationally recognized water laboratory in Lackawanna, which comply with the latest testing equipment. The National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) certifies each of these laboratories. NELAP is the national accrediting body, made up of state, federal and commercial laboratory accreditation officials, that sets strict standards for public and commercial laboratories across the country.

Highly trained water treatment plant operators perform hourly tests at each phase of the treatment process. Our professional water quality staff also collects over 220 samples a month from the distribution system and tests for organic and inorganic compounds, and microbial contaminants. The results are sent to both the New York State and Erie County Health Departments to confirm that the ECWA is meeting all of its regulatory requirements.

The ECWA employs 250 dedicated professionals who continuously participate in educational training, licensing programs and professional associations to develop their skills to the highest possible level.

Some people live in your communities, are your friends and drink the same water you do. No wonder they are committed to making sure that your water is safe, pure and affordable.

Fluoride

The ECWA’s water system operates under “NO VARIANCE OR EXEMPTION” from any federal or state regulatory requirements. To comply with EPA mandated requirements, water quality data tables of detected regulated and unregulated contaminants, are detailed in this report. The tables summarize test results for the past year, and test results for the past five years. All of the tables are detailed in accordance with regulatory requirements. They also list the maximum contaminant levels (MCLs). The EPA is responsible for establishing the MCL standards. For your convenience, important terms and definitions are detailed throughout this document. More information regarding all substances tested for, but not detected, can be obtained by calling the Customer Service Department at 840-8486.

Is the Public Informed If the Water Is Not Safe to Drink?

EPA regulations mandate the ECWA notify its customers if water is not safe to drink. Water is not safe to drink when testing reveals that contaminants in the water exceed federal or state limits for contaminants. In the unlikely event that water becomes unsafe to drink, the ECWA will issue a “boil water order” and notify the public by television, newspaper and radio announcements.

Cryptosporidium and Giardia Analysis?

The ECWA’s Water Quality Laboratory is recognized as one of the most well equipped labs in North America that is capable of testing for Giardia and Cryptosporidium. In fact, our lab was one of the first labs in the country to gain EPA approval for the analysis of Cryptosporidium and Giardia, and continues to participate in the EPA’s Laboratory Quality Assurance Evaluation Program for the analysis of Cryptosporidium. The ECWA also tests for these protozoa for other major public water supplies throughout the country.

New York State Department of Health Source Water Assessment

The New York State Department of Health completed a draft Source Water Assessment of the supply’s raw water sources under the state’s Source Water Assessment Protocol. The New York State Department of Health Source Water Assessment Protocol is a program designed to strengthen the safety of drinking water for our customers above and beyond what is currently required by law. The New York State Department of Health, in cooperation with the Erie County Health Department, New York State University, and the Partnership for Safewater, has completed a draft source water assessment for the ECWA. The draft report is available upon request from the ECWA Water Quality Laboratory (716) 588-6809. If you have any questions about New York State’s Source Water Assessment Program, please contact Ms. Dolores Funke, P.E., Senior Public Health Engineer, New York State Department of Health, at 858-6966.

Erie County Water Authority – Providing Water You Can Trust!

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