

Sygo, Jim (DEQ)

From: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ)
Sent: Monday, October 19, 2015 8:36 AM
To: Wurfel, Sara (GOV); Murray, David (GOV); Agen, Jarrod (GOV); Muchmore, Dennis (GOV); Wyant, Dan (DEQ)
Cc: Tommasulo, Karen (DEQ); Krisztian, George (DEQ); Sygo, Jim (DEQ); Eisner, Jennifer (DHHS)
Subject: DRAFT DEQ Statement on leadership change And KEY MESSAGES-- Need review ASAP
Importance: High

This is going out to media as soon as I've got green light from folks in the "to" line. Everyone else is also welcome to share thoughts as well.

Thanks for fast review.

b

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DEQ Director Dan Wyant today made the following statement as he announced DEQ Chief Deputy Jim Sygo will immediately assume the role of interim chief of the department's Office of Drinking Water and Municipal Assistance:

"It recently has become clear that our drinking water program staff made a mistake while working with the City of Flint. Simply stated, staff employed a federal protocol they believed was appropriate, and it was not. The water testing steps followed would have been correct for a city less than 50,000 people, but not for a city of nearly 100,000.

As details of the situation emerge, I am convinced our program staff believed they were doing their job right. As the state recognized there could be a health threat to Flint residents, we took appropriate steps. We are now embarked on an unprecedented effort to safeguard Flint residents and families with near-term, intermediate and long-term actions to protect and educate city residents.

The issue in DEQ is experience and protocol with respect to corrosion control. The Governor has called for an independent, third-party after-action review. I have taken the step of changing leadership in the division. We are working with our federal partners and committed to being part of the U.S. EPA's effort to strengthen its Lead and Copper rule.

All who brought this issue to the department deserve credit for bringing it forward. Lead is a serious issue, particularly for young people, and we take it seriously. The Governor's plan incorporates the suggestions outlined by the EPA and researchers at Virginia Tech.

We will learn from this. We will make necessary changes to see to it that our program becomes a national leader in public health protection."

KEY MESSAGES:

1. It is increasingly clear through internal review at DEQ that staff overseeing drinking water mistakenly applied the wrong federal protocol when the city of Flint switched to the Flint River.
2. Today's announcement of new leadership in that division aligns with the states goal: make sure the public health is protected in Flint and elsewhere in the state, and ensure we learn from this so it never happens again.
3. The governor's action plan continues to protect kids and families in Flint, with the switch back to Detroit water last week, free water filtration for all city residents, and inspection of all Flint schools for lead exposure.
4. Flint families who are concerned are encouraged to take advantage of free home water testing through the city and blood lead level testing for children.