American Water Newsroom

Following NJ DEP's Identification of a Third-Party Compound Leak, New Jersey American Water Continues to Monitor Water Quality in its Raritan System; No Drinking Water Advisories in Effect

CAMDEN, N.J. – DEC. 23, 2024 – New Jersey American Water continues to monitor water quality following reports of changes in the taste and odor of drinking water from customers served by its Raritan System. In a statement today, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP) reported the initial results of its investigation, which attributes these changes to a leak that occurred on Dec. 16 from a repackaging facility in Branchburg, N.J. into a tributary of the Raritan River. The facility repackages fragrances, essential oils, and flavorings.

New Jersey American Water continues to monitor water quality and laboratory testing indicates that the water leaving New Jersey American Water's two Raritan system treatment plants meets state and federal primary drinking water standards established by NJ DEP and US EPA and does not pose a public health risk.

"Providing safe drinking water to our customers is our foremost priority," said Mark McDonough, president of New Jersey American Water. "Since Tuesday, Dec. 17, our teams have worked tirelessly, collecting hundreds of water quality samples around the clock throughout our system to help address the cause of the changes in taste and odor. Our proactive measures to adjust our treatment process and flush our system have allowed us to continue to provide water to our customers that meets state and federal drinking water quality standards, despite these challenges."

New Jersey American Water first received customer inquiries regarding a change in taste and odor in the water in its Raritan system late in the evening on Tuesday, December 17. The company began to investigate and performed a series of actions including sampling and testing from the source water, different points in the treatment system of its water treatment plants, and sites throughout the distribution system. To address the issue, New Jersey American Water proactively adjusted its treatment processes and commenced targeted hydrant flushing across the system.

According to the NJ DEP, the material of the spill consisted of compounds, most notably alpha-pinene, which are commonly used as fragrance and food additives. Due to the fragrant nature of the compound, it can be smelled at minute concentrations measured in parts per trillion (ppt). For context, 1 ppt is equivalent to 4 drops of liquid in the amount of water that would fill Rutgers University's SHI Stadium. Though detection levels of the compound are infinitesimal, customers may continue to notice the taste and odor over the next several days.

"We are grateful to the NJ DEP for their collaboration and diligence in investigating the cause of this issue that has resulted in both of our teams working around the clock and our customers concerned about the safety of the water," said Mark McDonough, President, New Jersey American Water. "We understand our customers' frustration, and we look forward to the prompt resolution of this problem."

New Jersey American Water will continue to monitor water quality in cooperation with the NJ DEP and provide any additional updates to customers via its customer notification system as well as a dedicated webpage for this issue, njamwaterwaterquality.com, which includes a form for customer inquiries.

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