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## Report says fluoride caused major breakdown

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The hydrofluorosilicic acid used to fluoridate the City of Waterloo was one of the main contributors to a breakdown that has kept more than 60 per cent of Waterloo from receiving water fluoridation.

Since last March the majority of the city hasn't received water fluoridation due to a series of breakdowns, upgrades and scheduled maintenance on three major sites operated by the Region of Waterloo that inject the chemical into the city's water supply.

Nancy Kodousek, the region's manager of water operations, said all three events were different. The cost of repairs is \$49,000 and climbing as they work to get the last site up and running by the end of the year.

The surprising news that most of Waterloo hasn't been fluoridated this past year caused a furor two weeks ago over the apparent lack of communication and sparked a review of what was going on with the injection system.

The Erb Street fluoridation injection site remains problematic and is still undergoing repairs, said Kodousek. It is a water main that serves as a water transfer point from Kitchener, and includes an injection site where hydrofluorosilicic acid is added to Waterloo's water.

"We're working with a consultant and we're trying to get this done as soon as possible," said Kodousek. "But it is a very complicated repair."

Kodousek said the site went off line last May and described the nature of the breakdown.

"Within that metering chamber and water main we have a fluoride injection system, and it was the injection point that failed in the water main and caused some flooding and pressure fluctuations," she said. "We were immediately able to repair the water main, but it was not possible to repair the injection point."

"The material, fluoride, is a very aggressive type of material and the age of the infrastructure all would be contributing factors into that failure."

Kodousek said to her knowledge there hasn't been a similar failure in the water fluoridation system at any other injection points.

The other injection site on the Erb Street system was shut down earlier in March because an inspection revealed some equipment that needed to be replaced in addition to upgrades to the ventilation system at the site.

"It was part of our normal maintenance, and on visual inspection it was deemed that they shut it down," said Kodousek. "There was also a requirement for a more detailed assessment and a consultant was brought in to do the assessment for us."

"From there it was determined an upgrade to both the facility and chemical supply system were required. They were scheduled and completed in the fall into September and October."

The fluoridation system at the final injection site at the William Street pumping station was shut down because of well rehabilitation work. The whole supply system was shut down for a couple of months in the spring and was brought back on line on May 31.

Kodousek said the system was brought back on line but the fluoridation system wasn't reactivated until a series of maintenance activities and upgrades were started in June and weren't completed until the fall.

"That's when it went back on line," she said.

As it stands now only 40 per cent of the city is receiving fluoridated water.

When asked if there was any spike in the amount of fluoride that entered the system at that time, Kodousek said she was not aware of any issues.

“They try to maintain it within the thresholds, so I’m not aware of any spikes occurring,” she said.

Water officials presented regional council with a report yesterday about the timelines involved and the discrepancies in reporting it to council and the general public.

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