

The City of Cahokia Heights has had overflows from the City's sewers that could impact human health. City residents have reported drinking water issues. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Illinois EPA are working to ensure that sewage and drinking water-related issues within the City of Cahokia Heights are addressed. Tackling this potential human health risk is a top priority for both agencies.

What is EPA Doing?

EPA has conducted ten inspections of the sewer collection systems in the former City of Centreville, the former Village of Alorton, the former Village of Cahokia, the Commonfields of Cahokia Sewer District, and the new City of Cahokia Heights. EPA inspectors have observed sewer overflows and operations and maintenance deficiencies during those inspections.



Sewage flowing from a sewer cleanout pipe and into a ditch

EPA also conducted Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) compliance inspections in the Cahokia Heights area in April and August 2021. EPA identified maintenance issues during SDWA inspections that could potentially affect drinking water quality.

What Is EPA Requiring?

In August 2021, EPA issued an enforcement order under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA Order) to: Commonfields of Cahokia Public Water District, Illinois American Water Company, Village of Cahokia Public Water Supply, and the City of Cahokia Heights. This order requires them to:

- Monitor water pressure (if there is low water pressure, there is potential for contamination in the drinking water system).

- Conduct monitoring for the presence of bacteria and the level of chlorine to help identify if sewage is entering the drinking water system.
- Notify residents who are directly impacted by a drop in water pressure that could cause contamination, potentially issue a boil water advisory and provide bottled water as necessary. These notification measures will remain in place until repairs to the system are made and/or sample results are negative for bacteria;
- Address operation and maintenance issues, including increasing staffing and repairing storage tanks and parts of the distribution systems.

In August 2021, EPA signed a Clean Water Act Administrative Order with the City of Cahokia Heights regarding the sewer collection system, which requires the city to begin improvements to its sewer system, create a plan to address citizen complaints, and report to EPA.

What Can You Do?

To protect your health, you should avoid contact with untreated sewage, including floodwaters that may contain sewage. If it is necessary to approach an area contaminated by sewage, turn off the electricity, and wear protective clothing such as rubber boots and gloves when entering the affected area. Be alert for hazards such as broken gas lines, flooded electrical circuits, and submerged furnaces or electrical appliances.

To Report Complaints

Residents should immediately report sewage issues to the City of Cahokia Heights at (618) 332-1222 or (618) 332-6620. Drinking water concerns should be reported to the City of Cahokia Heights or Illinois American Water at (618) 239-3274.

Report possible environmental violations to:

- EPA Region 5 toll-free at: 800-621-8431 (available M-F, during business hours)
- EPA: <https://echo.epa.gov/report-environmental-violations>
- Illinois EPA: (217) 524-3038 or
- <https://www2.illinois.gov/epa/pollution-complaint/Pages/submit-a-complaint.aspx>

Actions to Date

What actions have been taken so far under the EPA orders?

Beginning in September of 2021, under the Clean Water Act Order the City has taken the following actions:

- Investigated the causes of dry-weather overflows in specific areas of the city.
- Reported sewer overflows to EPA.
- Trained all sewer staff regarding inspection of sewer lift stations.
- Addressed conditions with the potential to cause accidental injury to workers and residents at lift stations, including unsecured or uncovered manholes and vaults, and open electrical panels; and
- Developed plans and procedures to improve operation and maintenance of the sewer system.

Beginning in August of 2021, under the SDWA Order both Illinois American Water Company and the newly formed City of Cahokia Heights have taken the following actions:

- Met with EPA on a weekly basis regarding scheduled system improvements, repairs, and monitoring results.
- Conduct bacterial and chlorine monitoring after sewer overflows within the city.
- Installed continuous pressure monitors to monitor drinking water pressure throughout its distribution systems.

- Increased the number of bacteria sampling locations across the city where chronic SSOs were occurring.
- Began correcting system maintenance issues and are developing plans for long term repairs.
- Submitted a plan for each system to provide bottled water as required under the SDWA Order; and
- Developed guidance on sampling and notification procedures after sanitary sewer overflow events occur within the city

○ Contacts

For questions please contact:

Jim Adamiec at (312)886-0815 or adamiec.james@epa.gov for drinking water questions.

Or

Dean Maraldo at (312) 353-2098 or maraldo.dean@epa.gov for water/sewer questions.