

St. John Water District 1 Frequently Asked Questions

*On August 27, 2014, the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) discovered the presence of the *Naegleria fowleri* amoeba in the [St. John Water District 1 system](#).*

I receive my drinking water from St. John Water District 1 in the towns of Reserve, Garyville and Mt. Airy, what does this mean for me?

Your water system has tested positive for the presence of *Naegleria fowleri*, a deadly amoeba that can infect the brain only by entering your nose. You should take precautions to prevent this amoeba from going up your nose.

Is my water safe to drink or use to bathe or cook?

Yes, based on the latest test results, the water from this system is safe to drink and safe to bathe and cook with.

What should I do to protect myself and my family?

Take steps to prevent water from this system from going up your nose. The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have provided a list of precautionary measures that families can take to protect themselves from exposure to this amoeba. These precautionary measures are detailed on DHH's Water Facts page at www.dhh.la.gov/waterfacts.

What happens next?

DHH has issued an emergency order requiring St. John Water District 1 to perform a free-chlorine burn (maintain 1.0 mg/l of free chlorine throughout the system for 60 days) to kill the amoebae within the water system. The water will remain safe to drink during this time. At the end of 60 days, DHH will sample the system again for presence of the amoeba. In previous cases here in Louisiana, this action has been effective in killing the amoeba. The emergency order also requires the system to achieve and maintain compliance with the state's minimum chlorine residual of 0.5 mg/l throughout their system.

Is St. John Water District 1 in the towns of Reserve, Garyville and Mt. Airy going to be penalized?

No, an emergency order has been issued to the water system. Failure to comply with the emergency order could result in a penalty up to \$3,000 per day.

How many people does the St. John Water District 1 in the towns of Reserve, Garyville and Mt. Airy serve?

Approximately 12,577 people.

How is DHH sure that water systems are meeting the chlorine residual requirements?

Water system operators are responsible for collecting the samples for chlorine residuals to meet the emergency

rule. Now that the emergency rule has been in place for several months, DHH is actively auditing water systems around the state to ensure they are meeting the required minimum chlorine residual. DHH has not found the amoeba where water systems have met the minimum chlorine residual level.

What does the St. John, St. Bernard and DeSoto water systems have in common?

These three systems all had very low or non-existent chlorine levels where the amoeba was detected.

How often are water systems tested for *Naegleria fowleri*? How does DHH determine which water systems to test for *Naegleria fowleri*?

In response to the detections of *Naegleria fowleri* last year in St. Bernard and Desoto parishes, DHH has been working to develop lab testing ability in its Office of Public Health Laboratory. That capability now exists and a surveillance program has been launched for the remainder of our warm weather season. The water systems that are selected for monitoring as part of this surveillance effort are chosen based on differing source types, treatment processes, geographical locations, and compliance histories in order to obtain a broad view of water systems around the state.

How long does it take to test a water system for *Naegleria fowleri*?

It takes about 1 hour to collect one sample from the water system. Once collected, the sample(s) are taken to the Office of Public Health Laboratory. It takes approximately 12 business days to complete analysis and obtain results.

Why does testing take 12 days?

Testing to detect the amoeba are very detailed and take several days to process. It involves growing the amoeba and running two separate tests.

Does my water system have *Naegleria fowleri*?

Water systems that maintain the minimum chlorine residual throughout their water system are not likely to have *Naegleria fowleri* living in the water delivered to the customer. DHH issued the emergency rule based on the best available science we have today which indicates that chlorine will control the amoeba.