

## **Ebarb Water District 1 Aimwell Area Frequently Asked Questions**

*On Sep. 12, 2014, the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) discovered the presence of the Naegleria fowleri ameba in the Ebarb Water District 1 Aimwell Area.*

### **I receive my drinking water from Ebarb Water District 1 Aimwell Area, what does this mean for me?**

Your water system has tested positive for the presence of Naegleria fowleri, a deadly ameba that can infect the brain only by entering your nose. You should take precautions to prevent this ameba 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 ameba. These precautionary measures are detailed on DHH's Water Facts page at [www.dhh.la.gov/waterfacts](http://www.dhh.la.gov/waterfacts).

### **What happens next?**

DHH has issued an emergency order requiring Ebarb Water District 1 Aimwell Area to perform a free-chlorine burn (maintain 1.0 mg/l of free chlorine throughout the system for 60 days) to kill the amebae 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 ameba. In previous cases here in Louisiana, this action has been effective in killing the ameba. 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 Ebarb Water District 1 Aimwell Area 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 Ebarb Water District 1 Aimwell Area serve?**

Approximately 5,529 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 ameba where water systems have met the minimum chlorine residual level.

### **What do the St. John, St. Bernard, DeSoto and Ebarb Water District 1 Aimwell Area water systems have in common?**

These four systems all had very low or non-existent chlorine levels where the ameba 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 14 business days to complete analysis and obtain results.

### **Why does testing take 14 days?**

Testing to detect the ameba are very detailed and take several days to process. It involves growing the ameba 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 ameba.