Tri County Area Schools
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TRI COUNTY AREA SCHOOLS
Educational Service Center

ALLEN CUMINGS, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

August 3, 2018

Press Release

While participating with an initiative sponsored by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), Tri County Area Schools received water test results on August 2, 2018, that indicated the Middle School water sources had tested positive for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS). The results showed that the Middle School tested at 62 parts per trillion (ppt), slightly below the EPA required limits for PFOA and PFOS of 70 parts per trillion. PFAS were not detected at Tri County High School. The elementary schools are on municipal water and are currently being tested. District officials noted that the results will be released as soon as they are received.

"Tri County Area Schools is committed to providing our students, staff and community with quality drinking water," said Superintendent Al Cumings. "We are working closely with MDEQ and are taking immediate steps to provide bottled water while investigating the source of the PFAS issue."

Cumings went on to say that even though the test results at the Tri County Middle School are below federal limits, the district is taking the following measures to ensure safe drinking water is available:

1. Providing bottled water for drinking and meal preparation (immediately drinking fountains will not be available for use)
2. Retaining an independent Environmental Engineering firm
3. Working with the MDEQ to identify a plan with a timeline to address this issue
4. Working with MDEQ to evaluate alternative water sources
5. Cooperating with the MDEQ with regard to additional water testing and its investigation

District officials noted that with safe drinking water an issue of concern across the state, they had been cooperating on an initiative with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to test drinking water from schools using well water and community water supplies. The initiative is designed to determine if public health action is needed.

The testing process identifies man-made chemicals called per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Since PFAS break down slowly and move easily into water, it is not uncommon to find low levels of PFAS in drinking water. They are also found in stain repellants, nonstick cookware, waterproof clothing, food wrappers, and other household products.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) has suggested limits for two PFAS in drinking water, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS). The EPA has not set health advisory levels for other PFAS compounds. All Tri County Area Schools are being tested by AECOM, the MDEQ's contractor.

"We will keep our community updated as we work with MDEQ to resolve this issue. Look for a *Frequently Asked Questions* document soon to come," said Superintendent Cumings. "The health and safety of our students and staff members remains our number one priority."

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“We are looking forward to a great 2018-19 school year,” said Cumings, “I want to express my thanks to the many parents and community members who continue to express support for our district and work hard on behalf of our students. Together we are educating, encouraging and empowering our students.”

Community members and parents are advised to contact the District’s central office if there are questions and concerns on this issue or related to issues around the start of school year.

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