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Statement from Water Quality Association President Don McGhee on President Obama’s Visit to Flint, Michigan

The Water Quality Association (WQA) applauds President Barack Obama for the remarks he made on May 4, during his visit to Flint, Michigan.

President Obama assured residents that their water is safe for consumption as long as a water filter is used correctly. “...right now, it is safe for you to install a filter in your home, or to use a standalone filter and to go ahead and drink that water,” President Obama stressed. “But you got to use it. And it’s available to you—for free. But people have to have confidence that will work.”

President Obama is correct; everyone has the right to safe drinking water, and filtered water is the answer in Flint. Numerous communities across the United States are negatively impacted by the presence of naturally occurring or man-made contaminants in their water sources. As highlighted by the crisis in Flint, lead – a tasteless and odorless mineral – increases health risks when consumed in any concentration.

Studies indicate nearly all the lead in users’ tap water is a result of corrosion from materials containing lead coming into contact with water through the delivery infrastructure. Lead can leach into the water supply from service line connections, from lead solder used in copper piping, and from brass fixtures.

With a vast distribution system, the potential for chemical or microbial contaminants to enter the water is very real. Considering common water use, 99 out of every 100 gallons of drinkable water is not ingested by humans, but instead used to water lawns, flush toilets, fight fires, etc. We call this “working water.” Conversely, only about one percent of water treated by municipalities is consumed by people. That one percent can be economically treated to the highest safety levels at the point where water is consumed. **With drinking water filtration systems, residents do not have to compromise on the quality of water they consume.**

Remaining mindful that infrastructure repairs will take time, WQA offers immediate solutions such as certified water filters that are available now in addition to consumer education. President Obama mentioned:

“Even with all the money, even with an efficient, speeded-up process, it’s going to take a while for all the pipes to be replaced. It’s not going to happen next month. It’s not going to happen six months from now, where all the pipes in Flint are going to be replaced. We’ve got to get started, and you need to see that it’s getting started and that progress is being made. But it’s not going to happen overnight.”

President Obama is right again; it will take time to fix the long term solution. In the meantime, communities in need of safe drinking water should not have to struggle to receive bottled water or be concerned, in Obama’s words with, “what’s safe and what information is correct and what is not.” Scientists have proven filters can remove lead and with proper maintenance can be the immediate solution to provide safe water to residents while the water system is being repaired.

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Scientists and the President are supporting filters as the immediate solution. President Obama told the people of Flint:

“The first is that while you are waiting to get your pipes replaced, you need to have a filter installed, and use that filter. And if you do use that filter, then the water is safe to consume for children over the age of six and who are not pregnant.”

Now that Flint is getting the support they need, the conversation is evolving into a much larger discussion about the nation’s drinking water infrastructure and the contaminant issues other communities are facing. During National Drinking Water Week (May 1-7), let us remember that our nation’s drinking water problems are not exclusive to Flint, Michigan, and are not limited to lead. For example, a new study from the [National Cancer Institute](#) looked at arsenic in New England ground water, Iowa is addressing nitrates, and the western states have taken steps to protect their drinking water during the continued drought.

The three essential take-away tips for residents concerned about their water are: get your water tested by a certified water testing laboratory; consult with a certified water treatment professional, and; when selecting a water treatment solution, look for certified products with validated claims.

WQA members are the people and businesses who work to make sure that water is safe and clean. The Association provides resources for consumers to find a water professional in their area and look for third-party certified products that have been tested by the [WQA Product Certification Program](#). I encourage anyone looking for more information on drinking water to visit [WQA.ORG](#).

WQA is a not-for-profit trade association representing the residential, commercial, and industrial water treatment industry. To best serve consumers, industry members and government officials, WQA has an ongoing dialogue with other organizations representing all aspects of the water treatment industry. Since 1959, the WQA Gold Seal certification program has been certifying products that contribute to the safe consumption of water. The WQA Gold Seal program is accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the Standards Council of Canada (SCC).

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2016-2017 President
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