

WSSC's PINHOLE LEAK PREVENTION PILOT

Fact Sheet

- The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission's (WSSC) pinhole leak prevention pilot began in late April in an apartment building in the Laurel area.
- The building has experienced a high frequency of pinhole leaks (approximately 24 pinhole leaks since January 2001) and volunteered to participate in the pilot program in an attempt to prevent future leaks.
- Because their pinhole leak activity closely matches the data/trends collected from customers throughout Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, WSSC selected this facility as the best location for this prevention pilot.
- WSSC met with apartment management and residents on several occasions to discuss the pilot and answer their questions.
- WSSC will add a very small amount of orthophosphate to the water supply, approximately one part per million (equivalent to one milligram per liter).
- In contrast, some popular soft drinks use 500 times more phosphate per liter.
- Research indicates people already consume 1,000 to 1,500 milligrams of phosphate per day in their diet.
- In laboratory tests conducted for WSSC, orthophosphate was effective in stopping pinhole leak activity.
- With approximately 50 percent of utilities nationwide using phosphates, including Rockville, MD and Fairfax, VA, WSSC is confident that adding orthophosphate to the treatment process is completely safe.
- Many water utilities have been safely using phosphates since the passage of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Lead and Copper Rule (1992) to reduce lead and copper levels in tap water.
- Phosphates are FDA approved, considered completely safe by the Center for Science in the Public Interest and used in many of our favorite foods / drinks, including: cheese; cakes; cookies; breads; crackers; powdered foods; cured meat; breakfast cereals; dehydrated potatoes; butter; chocolates; and soft drinks.
- Only a small fraction of the phosphates in the American diet comes from additives. Most comes from meat and dairy products. Research indicates people already consume 1,000 to 1,500 milligrams of phosphate per day in their diet.
- To date, WSSC has received more than 4,300 pinhole leak reports from Montgomery and Prince George's County customers.
- The pilot project will be mutually beneficial as the apartment building will receive a water treatment enhancement that should significantly reduce costly pinhole leaks, while results from the program will help us evaluate potential system-wide application.
- The pilot program will last approximately six months at a cost of \$5,000 to \$10,000.