



Report Highlights

Safe Drinking Water Program

Louisiana Department of Health - Office of Public Health

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Why We Conducted This Audit

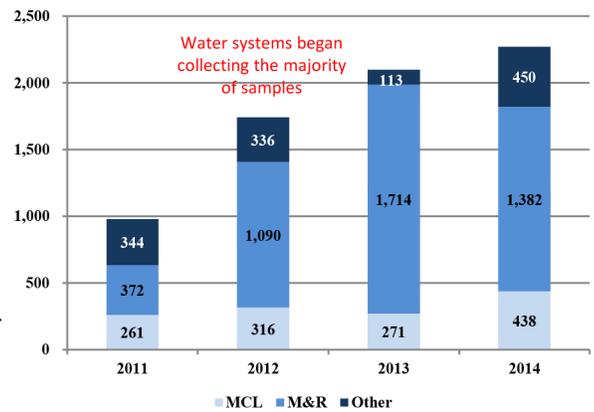
The purpose of this audit was to evaluate whether the Office of Public Health's (OPH) monitoring and enforcement activities ensure that public water systems provide safe drinking water to consumers in accordance with state and federal regulations. We conducted this audit because of issues with Louisiana's drinking water, including concerns over the color and smell, and the presence of *Naegleria fowleri* (brain-eating amoeba) in some parishes, which has resulted in three deaths in Louisiana since 2011.

View the full report, including management's response, at www.lla.la.gov.

What We Found

- Because of staffing reductions and a new EPA rule that requires increased sampling, OPH has had to rely on water systems to collect the majority of the water samples used to test for contamination since 2012. As a result, OPH cannot fully ensure the integrity of these samples. Since water systems began collecting the majority of water samples in 2012, the number of violations OPH has cited water systems for not collecting and reporting samples as required has increased by 193%.

Number of Violations
Calendar Years 2011-2014



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information contained in SDWIS as of September 30, 2015.

- Although OPH conducted all required sanitary surveys on 1,075 (89%) of 1,208 active water systems during calendar years 2009 through 2014, 48.1% of the surveys we tested were not conducted within required timeframes. If sanitary surveys are not conducted timely, the water system may operate with a deficiency for an extended period of time, potentially putting the quality of the drinking water at risk.
- Due to data limitations, OPH cannot ensure that it took appropriate enforcement action when water systems failed to resolve significant deficiencies identified on sanitary surveys. We identified a total of 1,031 unresolved significant deficiencies identified during sanitary surveys between calendar years 2009 and 2014.
- OPH did not always cite violations for water systems that did not perform public notifications. During calendar year 2011 through 2014, OPH did not issue violations for 363 (35.4%) of 1,025 unperformed public notifications, as required by the EPA. Public notifications inform consumers when there are potential issues with their drinking water.
- OPH did not always follow its enforcement process. Specifically, OPH did not always follow up to determine if water systems complied with corrective actions and did not always escalate enforcement actions when it identified continued noncompliance. For example, after finding that one water system did not resolve its violations cited on an administrative order, OPH did not take any further enforcement actions, such as issuing a civil penalty. As a result, the water system remained out of compliance as of the date of our analysis.