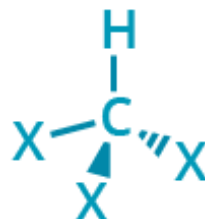


THE FLINT WATER CRISIS

The American city of Flint, Michigan, has been in the news recently due to the discovery of very high levels of lead in its water supply. But how did this lead get there? Here's a brief explainer.



TRIHALOMETHANES

Disinfectant byproducts; formed by the reaction of chlorine (added to disinfect the water) with organic matter.

X = halogen (commonly Cl or Br)

CORROSION: DETROIT VS. FLINT RIVER

0.45

vs

1.60

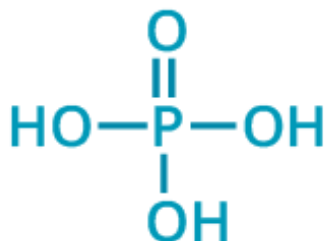
DETROIT

FLINT

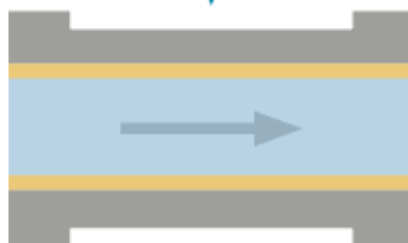
Chloride to sulfate mass ratio (CSMR); 0.45 = low corrosion; 1.60 = very high corrosion.

When high levels of trihalomethanes were detected in Flint's water, ferric chloride (FeCl_3) was added to improve removal of organic matter. However, this increased the water's already high concentration of chloride ions, and as a result made the water more corrosive.

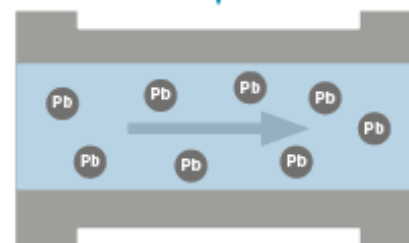
CORROSION CONTROL



WITH PHOSPHATES



WITHOUT PHOSPHATES



Orthophosphates are added to water to reduce the amount of lead leaching into it from pipes. They do this by forming a layer of low-solubility lead-phosphate complexes inside the pipe. This method of corrosion control was not used for the Flint River water supply.

