



# Information Sheet

## Drinking Water and Barrie Park

June 2003

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*This information sheet is one in a series created to inform the community about the environmental clean up underway at Barrie Park, the site of a former Manufactured Gas Plant.*

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### Background

Barrie Park was once the site of a plant where coal was processed into gas for heating, cooking and lighting. Such plants were once scattered across the northeast and Midwest, and were called manufactured gas plants, or MGPs. Although operations ceased at the Barrie Park MGP around 1928, byproducts of the process in concentrations that exceed environmental standards have been found in the park soil below the ground surface. The Village and park district have negotiated the parameters of a clean up with Commonwealth Edison Co. and Nicor Gas Inc., which, as successors of the company that operated the MGP, are now responsible for the clean up.

The clean up consists of excavating soil and transporting it off the site for further treatment and ultimate disposal. The most contaminated soil is being excavated under a tent-like structure, which helps control airborne emissions of contaminants and prevents soil from being blown from the site. Once this heavily contaminated soil has been excavated, the tent will be removed, and lesser-contaminated soil will be removed from areas of the site

where the tent once stood.

### Where does my drinking water come from?



Lake Michigan is the sole source of surface water used for drinking in the City of Chicago, and 123 suburban communities — including the Village of Oak Park. The Village purchases the water from the City of Chicago. Our water arrives pre-treated via a pipeline from the City of Chicago. This water is then put into one of three underground reservoirs here in Oak Park.

Water is then pumped from the reservoirs into the Village's distribution system, which consists of 105 miles of water mains ranging in size from six inches to 16 inches in diameter. More than two billion gallons of water are pumped through the Village's system in a year, or nearly six million gallons each day.

### How is water determined safe for drinking?

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), the U.S. EPA is responsible for setting national limits for hundreds of substances in drinking water and also specifies various treatments that water systems must use to remove these substances. Each water system continually monitors for these substances and reports to the Illinois EPA if substances are detected in the drinking water. The Illinois EPA uses this data to ensure that the communities are receiving clean water.

Water samples from the Village of Oak Park are routinely tested every step of the way – from the source of the water (Lake Michigan), to Oak Park's three reservoirs and then into randomly selected individual homes. The water is checked by a state-certified laboratory for purity, compliance with state and federal drinking water standards (called maximum contaminant levels or MCLs) and to correct potential problems. During the last full year for which testing was conducted, the water delivered to Oak Park homes and businesses met all state and federal drinking water requirements.

### Overview...

- Drinking water quality in the Village of Oak Park has always been monitored on a regular basis.
- Because drinking water distribution pipes are under pressure, the possibility of contamination from a break is extremely small. Damage to pipes would result in water leaking out of, not into the pipes.
- The Village has monitored water quality in the vicinity of Barrie Park during remediation. All tests have shown that the water quality in the neighborhood is no different than elsewhere in the community, and meets all state and federal drinking standards for drinking water.

## **Can chemicals from the Barrie Park MGP site get into my drinking water?**

It is unlikely that chemicals from the Barrie Park site could contact drinking water within the Village's water distribution pipes. The pipes that deliver water to people's homes are under pressure – imagine all the pressure needed to push almost six million gallons of water through 105 miles of pipe! If a small leak or loose fitting were present in any of the Village's water pipes, water would likely leak *out* – and not *in* – due to the pressure within the pipe.



Should a water main break in the Barrie Park area, the Village requires the construction contractors to repair the pipe under pressure. Residents may notice some loss of pressure at the tap during a repair, but the repairs are made without turning off pressure completely. The Village requires the contractor making the repair to notify affected residents, and explain the reason for the loss in pressure, such as a broken water pipe or loose fitting. In some cases, if water to a residence has ever been completely interrupted, the Village will sample the water within the pipe to ensure that it meets the federal and state drinking water standards prior to the water being restored.

## **Has the Village sampled the drinking water during the Barrie Park MGP cleanup?**

Yes. The Village sampled drinking water in the vicinity of Barrie Park prior to the start of the remediation and has continued to do so throughout the remediation process. In 1995 and prior to start of the remediation, the Village had the Illinois EPA collect samples of drinking water and evaluate the quality. These tests showed that drinking water in the Barrie Park neighborhood met all state and federal drinking water standards.

In addition, residential drinking water in the Barrie Park vicinity has been tested regularly in response to pressure loss in distribution pipes or other service disruptions. For example, in the case of residential water line breaks, a water sample is collected from the kitchen faucet at each home affected. The water samples then are sent to a state-certified lab, where they are checked for purity and compliance with state and federal drinking water standards (MCLs). The results of these tests have shown

that all water samples collected met the state and federal drinking water requirements.

## **How will I be notified if my drinking water needs to be sampled?**

Crews in the field will notify you if water samples are to be taken at your home during this time, or conditions warrant using bottled water. If no one is home when notification is underway, a written notice will be left at the front door. Residents with questions can call the Public Works Department at 708.358.5700 during regular business hours, or the police non-emergency number at 708.386.3800.

## **Will the Village sample my drinking water?**

If a resident has a particular concern about their drinking water, please call the Public Works Department. If these concerns indicate the need for sampling, the Village will conduct environmental testing of the resident's drinking water, as needed.

Should a water service pipe lose all pressure due to the cleanup of the former Barrie Park MGP, the Village will sample drinking water of all affected residences. In such a case, the Village will first remedy the cause of the pressure drop, and then sample the water within the pipe to ensure that it meets the federal and state drinking water standards. If this repair will take more than one day to fix, the resident will be supplied with bottled water.

### **For more information ...**

about your drinking water, please contact the Public Works Department at 708.358.5700.

If you experience a utility interruption, call the Public Works Department during regular business hours of 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m., Monday-Friday. After hours call the Barrie Park Community Hotline 708.445.8876, or the police non-emergency number 708.386.3800.