

# Possible link between Flint water system and health problems evaluated

March 1 2016

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Wayne State University announced today that it has formed the Flint Area Community Health and Environment Partnership (FACHEP). The research group, led by Wayne State researchers specializing in environmental engineering and public health, will conduct an independent study to evaluate the possible association between changes in Flint's water system and public health, specifically the recent Legionnaires' disease outbreak.

The first phase of the investigation is set to begin March 1, with FACHEP researchers engaging with the community to set up enhanced disease and environmental surveillance in Flint and Genesee County. Shawn McElmurry, an environmental and civil engineering professor in Wayne State's College of Engineering, will lead FACHEP's efforts, along with epidemiological investigator Dr. Paul Kilgore from Wayne State's Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences.

"Our number one goal at this early stage of the study is to connect with the people of Flint and Genesee County and build strong partnerships that will benefit the entire community," said McElmurry. "Our team has been in contact with Mayor Weaver's office and community organizations in Flint, and we look forward to working closely with these and other partners."

Residents living in the area who have been affected by the Flint [water](#) system can contact FACHEP by visiting [flint.wayne.edu](http://flint.wayne.edu).

As a leading expert in municipal water systems and surface water pollution, McElmurry has extensive experience working in Flint, where he has led multiple sampling campaigns and evaluated the area's ongoing drinking water quality crisis. He most recently served on the Flint Water Technical Advisory Committee.

McElmurry will lead FACHEP's three teams of technical experts: engineering and water quality, led by McElmurry; public health and epidemiological investigation, led by Kilgore, who also has led a number of investigations for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and community engagement, led by Kettering University's Laura Sullivan.

Programs to help inform the Flint community about health issues related to Legionella will be led by WSU communication professor and crisis and emergency risk expert Matthew Seeger, while Dr. Marcus Zervos, head, division of infectious diseases at Henry Ford Health System, will focus on defining clinical cases, characterizing patient exposures and supporting strong partnerships with healthcare organizations in Flint.

"We fully expect the scope of our research to evolve as we get more input from the community and government in the coming months," said McElmurry. "We have assembled a very talented group of researchers with different expertise and backgrounds so we can be nimble in our response to any change in direction the study may take."

WSU is uniquely qualified to lead this investigation given its already established set of relationships and expertise in expertise in urban water issues, engineering, public health, and social science. Experts from the university's Urban Watershed Environmental Research Group and NIH-funded Center for Urban Responses to Environmental Stressors have been actively engaged in Flint, assisting in the evaluation of drinking [water quality](#).

Provided by Wayne State University

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