

Water crisis grips US city after lead contamination

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Local politicians in Newark, New Jersey are struggling to resolve a crisis after environmental officials discovered high lead levels in tap water

A growing water crisis gripped a US city Thursday after environmental officials discovered high lead levels in tap water, sparking worry and

highlighting creaking infrastructure in a major urban centre.

Thousands of people in Newark, a city in New Jersey with a predominantly black and Hispanic population, have been told to drink only bottled water after the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found filters were not extracting lead properly.

The situation has drawn comparisons with a [water crisis](#) in the former industrial city of Flint, Michigan, which became a symbol of social injustice in America.

Officials are distributing free bottled water to some 15,000 affected households in Newark, which has 280,000 residents and sits just a few miles (kilometers) from New York City.

Local politicians, however, are struggling to resolve the crisis—the first warning signs of which came in 2017—and have called on President Donald Trump to step in.

"We need the [federal government](#) to do its share and punch its weight, Democratic Governor Phil Murphy told reporters on Wednesday.

Newark, known for its international airport and high crime rates, has distributed almost 40,000 water filters to residents recently.

Recent tests conducted in three households found that in two of them the level of lead was above the rate deemed acceptable by the EPA.

Health authorities have offered free filter tests to residents concerned that their water may be tainted.

New Jersey environment chief Catherine McCabe headed to Washington on Thursday to meet the head of the EPA, a federal body that oversees

human and environmental health in the United States.

"Newark's water emergency demands our federal government's immediate attention," tweeted senator and candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination Cory Booker, who also served as mayor of Newark from 2006 to 2013.

"Everyone deserves clean, safe water—it's shameful that our national crisis of lead-contaminated water disproportionately hits poor black and brown communities like my own," he added.

Flint's drinking water was contaminated three years ago when in a cost-saving drive, officials switched to a more corrosive water source that had not been properly treated.

The contamination, initially denied by state and local officials, poisoned thousands of children and caused the deaths of 12 people from Legionnaire's disease, according to authorities.

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