

Holyoke Water Works Institutes Public Safety and Protective Measures at Holyoke's Drinking Water Supply

The Holyoke Water Works (HWW) and the City of Holyoke will be instituting changes on Route 202 near the Ashley Reservoir entrance in efforts to reduce pedestrian accidents and to protect Holyoke's drinking water supply.

What's changing?

New guardrails will be installed on the eastbound and westbound sides of Route 202 along with concrete barriers at the entrance of Ashley Reservoir.

Why are the guardrails installed?

The guardrails are installed to ensure public safety. With increased visitors comes more vehicular traffic creating congestion and illegal parking along Route 202. HWW estimate that more than 75% of the vehicles visiting the Ashley Reservoir each day come from neighboring communities. Route 202 is a heavily travelled State highway, and parking along the shoulder poses a danger for motorists and pedestrians. HWW and the City are taking steps to eliminate this dangerous condition.

Why is the entrance way closed?

The Ashley Reservoir is currently not used as a primary source of drinking water for Holyoke residents. Although inactive, its current status with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) is listed as "emergency standby" and will remain classified with the State as a drinking water source. As a result of this change of use, the entrance is no longer used for day-to-day operations and maintenance of the water supply. In fact, over the years increased recreational use of the water supply has promoted parking in the entrance way and on Route 202. The guardrails and concrete barriers will eliminate parking and reduce the risk of accidents for vehicles pulling in and out of Route 202.

Why the need to protect our drinking water?

Holyoke's drinking water is one of the highest quality water sources in the region. In fact, it remains one of the few drinking water supplies that are not required by MassDEP to have a filtration system as part of its water treatment. Currently only chlorine, ammonia and UV disinfection are the primary forms of water treatment. Holyoke is only one of four Massachusetts communities to have acquired this waiver - Quabbin, Northfield and Concord are the remaining three. Unfortunately, a significant increase in visitors and rise in prohibited activity has threatened this status. Visitors who illegally fish, wade, swim and bring dogs into

the water supply has resulted in MassDEP alerting HWW to a violation of State Regulations 301 CMR 22.20B and Holyoke's Watershed Resource Protection Plan, threatening and/or possibly impacting Holyoke's source water quality. Continued violations eventually may jeopardize Holyoke's filtration waiver and result in construction of a filtration system at a cost in excess of \$20 million passed on to Holyoke's ratepayers in the form of higher water rates, an expense HWW is hoping to avoid.

What's NOT changing?

HWW will still permit visitors to enjoy Ashley Reservoir through passive recreational activity only. Visitors are welcome to walk, jog, or bicycle along the many access roads and paths in the water supply. Swimming, fishing, dog-walking and boating are activities that are strictly prohibited.

What is expected from the community?

The HWW and the City ask the public to understanding the importance of protecting and preserving Holyoke's precious resources and obey the guidelines developed for public use. If you visit the Ashley Reservoir, please refrain from fishing, swimming, dog-walking and boating. These activities pose a potential threat to the drinking water supply and could eventually impact the ratepayer of Holyoke if these illegal activities are allowed to continue.