Water Report — Worcester, Massachusetts

Prepared for: Worcester, MA · **Report date:** 2026-09-19
Water system: Worcester DPWP, Water Supply Division (PWSID MA2348000)
Data period: utility-published results read 2025-09-08
Written by: TapWaterData Editorial

> This is the sample report. It is written from the same data and to the same standard as a purchased one. Every figure carries its source and the date it was read, so you can check any of it yourself.

1 · Your water, in one sentence

Worcester's drinking water is inside every enforceable federal limit, with real margin — and the four results that sit "above the health goal" are all at a goal of zero, which is not the same thing as a limit being exceeded.

That distinction is the whole of section 3, and it is the reason this report exists.

2 · What matters for you

Of 152 substances the system tested for, **15 were detected at all** and **4 sit above a health-based goal**. Here is our triage.

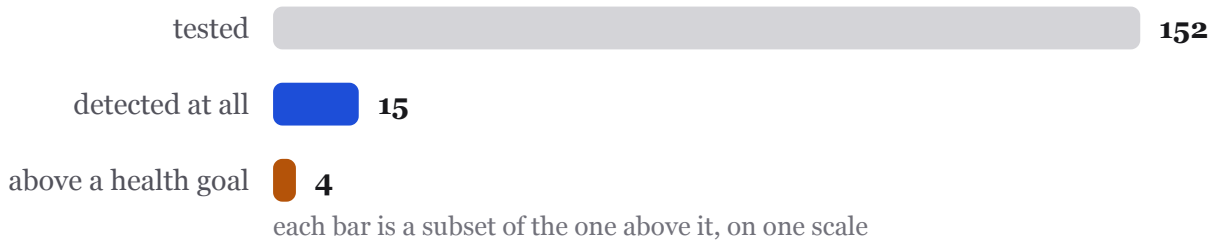

Figure 1 — 4 of the 15, and 15 of the 152. One set and two subsets of it.

Worth a decision

1 · Disinfection byproducts — the only finding we would act on, and only if you want to. Bromodichloromethane at 6.2 ppb and dichloroacetic acid at 10.3 ppb. Both are far below their enforceable group limits (80 ppb and 60 ppb). Neither is a reason for alarm. But they are the one group here that a $40 filter removes completely, so if you want the number closer to zero, this is the one where spending money actually changes something.

Worth knowing, not worth acting on

2 · PFAS — detected, and among the lowest we see. PFOA at 1.3 ppt and PFOS at 0.66 ppt, against an enforceable limit of 4 ppt each. Worcester is at 32.5% and 16.5% of the limit respectively. These are real detections and we do not round them away, but if you are reading about PFAS in the news, this system is not the story.

Not worth your attention

The remaining 11 detected substances are all at levels with no health-based concern at these concentrations: naturally occurring minerals, treatment residuals, and trace detections well inside every limit. **We are not going to list them to pad this report.** Nothing in that group would change a decision you make.

3 · The four findings, explained

The thing nobody explains: a goal of zero

Every one of the four is "above the health goal" because **its goal is zero.**

The EPA publishes two numbers for many contaminants:

- **MCL — the enforceable limit.** A legal maximum. Exceed it and the utility is in violation and must act.
- **MCLG — the health goal.** A non-enforceable target set with no margin for cost or feasibility. **For substances classified as probable human carcinogens, the EPA sets this to zero** — not because any detection is dangerous, but because the agency declines to name a dose it considers risk-free.

So "above the health goal" for these four means **"detected at all."** A system barely above its laboratory's detection limit and a system near its legal limit are both "above the goal". The number that tells you whether to worry is the distance to the *limit*.

Worcester has **zero MCL violations.**

3.1 · Bromodichloromethane — 6.2 ppb

Your level	6.2 ppb
Health goal (MCLG)	0
Enforceable limit	none individually; counted in **TTHM, group limit 80 ppb**
Tested	2025-09-08

Figure 2 — where 6.2 ppb falls on the scale from the health goal to the group limit.

One of four trihalomethanes formed when chlorine reacts with natural organic matter — decaying leaves, runoff, algae. Worcester draws from surface water and disinfects with chlorine and ozone, so some level of these is expected and is the direct consequence of water being disinfected, which is overwhelmingly a good trade.

It carries the strongest bladder-cancer signal of the four trihalomethanes in dose-response studies and is classed a probable human carcinogen. **The risk is chronic and lifetime, not acute.** Nothing about 6.2 ppb is an emergency, and it is well inside the group limit.

Who it matters more for: nobody in particular at this level. If you are pregnant or immunocompromised and would simply rather the number were lower, section 7 tells you how.

3.2 · Dichloroacetic acid — 10.3 ppb

Your level	10.3 ppb (0.0103 ppm as published)
Health goal (MCLG)	0
Enforceable limit	counted in **HAA5, group limit 60 ppb**
Tested	2025-09-08

The same story, different chemical family. One of five haloacetic acids, formed the same way by the same disinfection. Probable human carcinogen, chronic rather than acute risk, and at roughly a sixth of the group limit.

Grouped with 3.1 deliberately: they come from one cause and one filter handles both. Treat them as a single decision, not two.

3.3 · PFOA — 1.3 ppt · 3.4 · PFOS — 0.66 ppt

	PFOA	**PFOS**
Your level	1.3 ppt	0.66 ppt
Health goal (MCLG)	0	0
Enforceable limit (MCL)	**4 ppt**	**4 ppt**
Share of limit	32.5%	16.5%
Tested	2025-09-08	2025-09-08

The EPA's 2024 PFAS rule set enforceable limits of 4 parts per trillion for both. A part per trillion is roughly one drop in twenty Olympic pools; these are genuinely small numbers, and the fact that we can measure them at all is new.

Health effects associated with long-term PFAS exposure include cardiovascular, immune and liver effects, certain cancers, and developmental effects from exposure during pregnancy or childhood. Those associations come from populations with **far higher** exposure than 1.3 ppt.

Our honest read: this is not a PFAS problem. If PFAS is why you came looking, the useful answer is that Worcester is comfortably under the limit and you do not need to spend money on it.

4 · What this data does not tell you

The most important section, and the one no compliance report contains.

- **This is the system, not your tap.** Every figure is measured in the distribution system. Lead and copper are the clearest example: they come overwhelmingly from *your building's* plumbing and service line, so even a clean system-wide result would say little about a house built before 1986.
- **We hold no lead result for this system at all.** Not a clean one — none. Lead does not appear anywhere in Worcester's published record as we hold it, so this report cannot tell you what the system measured, and the sentence above is about what such a result would and would not mean rather than about one we have. If your building predates 1986, section 6's test is the only thing that answers it.
- **Three systems appear in Worcester's record; only one serves the city.** Shrewsbury Water Department and Holden Water Division also appear under Worcester in public datasets. **This report covers Worcester DPWP (MA2348000)** — the system serving the city itself. If your address is served by one of the others, the numbers differ and we will reissue at no charge.
- **Detection limits are not zero.** "Not detected" means "not found above the laboratory's reporting threshold", which varies by substance.
- **Absence of a row is not absence of a substance.** Where a system has never sampled for something, our data holds no row — which looks identical to a clean result unless someone checks. We checked: Worcester's record covers 152 analytes, including 18 PFAS compounds.
- **Our source data lists Worcester's treatment as "no treatment" while also listing chlorine and ozone as disinfectants.** Those cannot both be true. We treat the disinfectant field as correct — the disinfection byproducts in section 3 are physical evidence of it — and have flagged the record for correction.

5 · Direction of travel

Worcester's currently published record is a single reporting period read 2025-09-08. **We do not have a five-year series for this system that we would stand behind**, so we are not going to draw you a trend line out of one point.

What we can say: there are **no MCL violations on record**, and the PFAS results sit far enough below the 2024 limits that a doubling would still be compliant.

> A purchased report includes the multi-year series wherever the system publishes one. Where it does not, it says so — as here — rather than implying a trend from one reading.

6 · What to test at your own tap

Recommended: one test, and only if your building is older than 1986.

Test	Why	Roughly
Lead and copper	The one risk this system's data genuinely cannot answer, because it comes from your plumbing rather than the source	$50–60

Not recommended for this address:

- **A PFAS test.** The system is at a third of the limit and PFAS is not added by household plumbing. You would be paying ~$300 to confirm what the utility already measures.
- **A full multi-analyte panel.** Worcester tests 152 substances and publishes the results. Buying a $260 panel to re-measure them is money spent on reassurance you already have.
- **A disinfection-byproduct test.** They are present, the utility measures them, and the number will not change your decision in section 7.

If your home was built after 1986 and you have no taste or odour complaint, **our honest recommendation is that you do not need to test anything.**

7 · What to install — and what would be overkill

If you want the disinfection byproducts gone: a carbon filter certified to NSF/ANSI 53

That is the whole answer. A pitcher, faucet-mount or under-sink carbon filter **certified to NSF/ANSI 53** removes both bromodichloromethane and dichloroacetic acid. Expect **$30–120** plus cartridges.

Check the certification, not the marketing. "Filters 99% of contaminants" means nothing. NSF/ANSI 53 is the standard that covers these, and a certified product lists it.

What would be overkill here

- **Reverse osmosis ($200–500).** RO is the right answer for high TDS, nitrate, arsenic or a PFAS problem. **You have none of those.** It would work, it is simply more system, more cost and more wasted water than this water needs.
- **A whole-house system ($1,500–3,000).** Nothing in this record justifies treating the water you shower and wash with.
- **A water softener.** A softener addresses hardness. It is not a contaminant device and it would not touch anything in section 3.

And the legitimate answer nobody sells you

Nothing. Worcester's water is within every enforceable limit with margin. If you are content knowing that, you can close this report and spend the money on something else. We would rather tell you that than sell you a filter.

> **Disclosure.** We earn a commission when readers buy filters or test kits through our links. That is exactly why this section names a certification standard rather than a brand, and why "nothing" appears above as a real option.

8 · Sources

Figure	Source	Read
System identity, PWSID MA2348000, surface water, chlorine + ozone	Utility-published system record	2025-09-08
152 analytes tested, 15 detected, 0 MCL violations	Utility-published results	2025-09-08
Bromodichloromethane 6.2 ppb · Dichloroacetic acid 10.3 ppb (0.0103 ppm as published)	Utility-published results	2025-09-08
PFOA 1.3 ppt (0.0013 ppb as published) · PFOS 0.66 ppt (0.00066 ppb as published)	Utility-published results	2025-09-08
PFOA/PFOS MCL of 4 ppt	EPA 2024 PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulation	2026-09-19
TTHM group limit 80 ppb · HAA5 group limit 60 ppb	EPA National Primary Drinking Water Regulations	2026-09-19
MCLG of 0 for all four	EPA NPDWR health goals	2026-09-19
NSF/ANSI 53 as the applicable standard	NSF/ANSI standard scope	2026-09-19

What this report is. An interpretation of your water system's published results and the EPA's records, prepared by TapWaterData against a documented method, with every figure checked against its source and dated.

What it is not. A laboratory test of the water at your tap. It cannot tell you what your own plumbing adds, and it does not inspect your building.

If anything here is wrong, or it simply was not useful to you, reply to the email and we refund you in full.