

# Official takes plea, will help in Flint water investigation

By Elisha Anderson

Detroit Free Press

**FLINT** — A former director with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services pleaded no contest Wednesday to a misdemeanor in the Flint water crisis.

As part of the plea deal reached with Corinne Miller, the former director of the Bureau of Disease Control, Prevention and Epidemiology, two felonies were dismissed, including misconduct in office. She pleaded no contest to willful neglect of duty. As part of the agreement, Miller, who retired from the department in 2016, must cooperate with the Michigan Attorney General Office's investigation into the water crisis and provide truthful testimony.

"I wouldn't have put this deal together unless we knew what she could do," said Todd Flood, the lawyer spearheading the prosecutions. He declined to elaborate.

The agreement includes references to "Suspect 1" and "Suspect 2," and says Miller was asked in January 2015 to provide a report about an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease in the Flint area that started after the city changed its water supply from Lake Huron to the Flint River. She gave both people information about it, court documents say, but officials haven't revealed identities.

Miller is the second defendant to reach a plea deal among the nine charged in connection with Attorney General Bill Schuette's investigation.

Miller's attorney, Kristen Guinn, told 67th District Judge Jennifer Manley on Wednesday that the reason for the no-contest plea, which is treated the same as a guilty plea for the purposes of sentencing and conviction, is "there could be potential civil actions that could come from this."



ELISHA ANDERSON/DETROIT FREE PRESS

**Corinne Miller, right, in court with her lawyer, pleaded no contest to willful neglect of duty.**

Flood told the court that as of January 2015, Miller was aware that 42 cases of Legionnaires' disease had occurred in Genesee County during spring and summer 2014. He said she knew that number exceeded total cases for the prior four years combined and that Miller agrees it was an epidemic.

Flood said Miller knew people died after being diagnosed, and said she and other employees knew that unless the state provided proper notice, "it could be reasonably foreseeable that other innocent victims could be infected."

"Defendant willfully neglected to report the epidemic to health care providers or to the general public," Flood said.

There were 12 deaths linked to Legionnaires' disease during a 17-month period in 2014 and 2015 and 91 confirmed cases in Genesee County, state health officials said. In previous years, six to 13 cases were typically confirmed annually in the county.

The public wasn't notified about the outbreak until January 2016. The source has not been definitively determined.

Jennifer Eisner, a spokeswoman for the state health department, declined to comment on the developments.