

The City of Los Banos has Levels of Chromium-6 Above the Drinking Water Standard

The State Water Resources Control Board, on April 15, 2014, announced a new Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) of 10 parts per billion (ppb) for chromium-6, a mineral that occurs naturally at levels above the new MCL in the City of Los Banos' groundwater. The newly established MCL is one-fifth of the current total chromium standard in California of 50 ppb, which includes both trivalent chromium (chromium-3) and chromium-6. The Federal MCL for total chromium is 100 ppb.

We routinely monitor for the presence of drinking water contaminants. Water sample results received on June 2017 showed chromium-6 levels between 20 to 42 parts per billion (ppb). These results raised the annual average of all our potable supply wells to be above the new MCL of 10 ppb for the State of California. California is the first and only State in the nation to establish a maximum contaminant level specifically for chromium-6 in drinking water. This is not an emergency. If it had been, you would have been notified immediately. However, some people who drink water containing hexavalent chromium in excess of the MCL over many years may have an increased risk of getting cancer.

Our water system has violated the new drinking water standard for chromium-6. Although this is not an emergency, as our customers you have a right to know what happened, what you should do, and what we are doing to correct this situation.

What happened? What is being done? The State Water Resources Control Board's Division of Drinking Water (DDW) issued a Compliance Order to the City of Los Banos, seeking a plan to reduce the amount of chromium-6 in the water supply to newly adopted State levels. Hundreds of water agencies and cities throughout the State are now out of compliance and working with the State to develop affordable, effective solutions to reduce the amount of chromium-6 in our water. The legislation did not include any funding for improvements to water agencies.

To resolve the problem, the City has submitted a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) that includes corrective actions and timeline on when and how the City plans to approach the new MCL for chromium-6. Regarding treatment options, there are several State and Federal approved technologies available for chromium-6 treatment. Based on pilot projects and research conducted over the last decade by multiple water agencies in California, three technologies have been identified as leading candidates with respect to feasibility and cost: reduction/coagulation/filtration, weak base anion exchange and strong base anion exchange. The City is exploring all three at this time, as well as the option of introducing additional sources of water supply, to determine those best suited to meet our needs.

Should I be concerned? The City of Los Banos remains committed to delivering safe, reliable water to its residents and businesses. Potential health effects associated with consumption of water with levels of hexavalent chromium above the MCL is based on long-term exposure. The City is committed to exploring solutions expeditiously to relieve consumer concerns about health effects associated with the water supply. The following information can be helpful to keep in mind:

- **You do not need to use an alternative water supply (e.g., bottled water).** This is not an immediate risk. If it had been, you would have been notified immediately. However, some people who drink water containing hexavalent chromium in excess of the MCL over many years may have an increased risk of getting cancer.
- Tap water can still be used for drinking, cooking, and all other needs. Chromium-6 is found in groundwater as a naturally-occurring mineral, and is being regulated for potential health impacts.
- If you have other health issues concerning the consumption of this water, you may wish to consult your doctor.
- 100 parts per billion (ppb) is the Federal maximum contaminant level (MCL) set by the Environmental Protection Agency for total chromium. Total chromium includes both trivalent chromium (chromium-3) and hexavalent chromium (chromium-6).
- 50 ppb is the total chromium MCL for the State of California, set by the State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water, and is still in effect. Los Banos is in compliance with this standard.
- 10 ppb is the chromium-6 MCL for the State of California, set by DDW, effective July 1, 2014. This standard is basically a subset under total chromium and does not replace the California total chromium MCL of 50 ppb.

Secondary Notification Requirements: Upon receipt of this notification, the following entities must do additional notification within 10 days [Health and Safety Code Section 116450(g)]:

- SCHOOLS: Must notify school employees, students, and parents (if the students are minors).
- RESIDENTIAL RENTAL PROPERTY OWNERS OR MANAGERS (including nursing homes and care facilities): Must notify tenants.
- BUSINESS PROPERTY OWNERS, MANAGERS, AND/OR OPERATORS: Must notify employees of businesses located on the property.

This notice is being sent to you by the City of Los Banos.

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