

City of Vacaville

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STATE REVISES REPORTING LIMIT FOR CHROME+6 IN DRINKING WATER

A revision to Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations has resulted in two Vacaville water wells exceeding the reporting limit for levels of Hexavalent Chromium, also known as Chromium+6, or Cr+6.

Cr+6 is a naturally occurring ionic form of the element Chromium. It is found in geologic soils throughout California, and is mined as an ore to be used in industrial processes. The ore is used in making stainless steel, textile dyes, wood preservatives, leather tanning, paints, inks, plastics, and various coatings. Cr+6 is a known carcinogen, primarily entering the body through the lungs inhaled as dust, or in a vapor form due to high-heat industrial processes. Scientific studies have been inconclusive to date though as to whether Cr+6 is a proven carcinogen when ingested by drinking water containing traces of Cr+6.

In 2014, the State of California revised the maximum contaminant level, or MCL, for Cr+6 to 10 micro-grams per liter, or 10 parts per billion (10 ppb). The previous State of California MCL was 50 ppb for a number of years. This is a reduction of 40 ppb from the prior reporting requirement. The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has an established MCL for Total Chromium of 100 ppb, 90 ppb higher than the State's new standard.

Vacaville's groundwater wells have been providing drinking water to Vacaville's citizens since the 1950s, and there are no known cases of Cr+6-related cancers in Vacaville. The quality of Vacaville's groundwater has not changed during that time; however, the regulations have now changed.

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The new regulations require the City to provide public notification when a groundwater well exceeds 10 ppb over multiple sampling periods. In June 2015, two of Vacaville's wells exceeded the new state reporting requirements. The source of Cr+6 in Vacaville's groundwater is the natural occurrence of Cr+6 in the soil, it is not a result of any industrial pollution. There are no known Cr+6 industrial pollution sites in Vacaville.

The new regulations do not require the wells to be taken out of service, but require public notification. As a result, notices will be sent to all City of Vacaville water customers over the next few weeks via inserts in City water bills; notices in the local newspaper; and through the City's website and social media platforms. Additionally, the State Division of Drinking Water (DDW) is requiring Vacaville to develop a plan to bring Vacaville's wells into compliance. City staff are currently working with DDW to prepare that plan.

There are treatment processes that can be installed at the wells to treat for Cr+6. These treatment systems are very expensive, estimated at over \$1 million per well site. The City has performed a pilot study and is planning to install its first treatment system this year. Additional treatment systems are planned over the next five years as part of the City's compliance plan.

In 2014, the City distributed over five billion gallons of drinking water. This water was subjected to extensive testing, not only for regulated contaminants, but for many non-regulated chemical properties as well. More than 4,000 analyses were performed on drinking water samples in 2014. The City uses water from three different sources: Lake Berryessa, the Sacramento Delta, and groundwater wells. The water from the two wells with Cr+6 detected over the reporting limit provide a fraction of the potable water used in the City. This water is blended with the other water sources prior to delivery to customers, further decreasing the public's exposure to any Cr+6. The City's drinking water is completely safe for our customers to use.

The City will continue to monitor all of its wells and water sources on a regular basis to ensure we are providing the highest quality drinking water to our residents. For more information on the City's drinking water, please visit www.cityofvacaville.com/2014waterqualityreport.

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