



OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
351 North Mountain View Avenue, Third Floor ♦ San Bernardino, CA 92415-0010
(909) 387-9146 ♦ Fax (909) 387-6228

ALLAN RAWLAND, MSW, ACSW
Acting Public Health Director

TRUDY RAYMUNDO
Assistant Director of Public Health

MAXWELL OHIKHUARE, M.D.
Health Officer

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Contact: Maxwell Ohikhuare, M.D.
Health Officer
(909) 387-6218

Public Health Advisory Water Situation in Barstow Area

The Golden State Water Company issued a “do not consume” order to its customers in the Barstow area because levels of perchlorate in the water were detected in excess of the 6 parts per billion allowed by California Department of Public Health guidelines during testing last week. This order has been lifted for a portion of the community. Water in the area was last tested in 2008, and at that time perchlorate was not detected.

The county and the state do not know how much perchlorate residents have consumed. However, even though the levels detected last week – 4 to 97 parts per billion – exceed state guidelines, these levels would most likely not have a health impact on even the most sensitive individual.

Any effects from perchlorate exposure are long-term. People exposed to perchlorate do not experience immediate symptoms. Adverse health effects associated with perchlorate exposure at harmful levels are expected to be similar to those caused by iodine deficiency in humans. In those cases signs include: impairment in physical development, behavior, movement, speech, hearing, vision, and intelligence. Fever and nausea are NOT symptoms of perchlorate exposure.

People concerned about having been exposed to perchlorate do not require emergency medical attention. People concerned about having been exposed to perchlorate should advise their doctors, who in turn will determine whether testing and treatment are necessary.

Perchlorate is a chemical that can interfere with human thyroid gland function, potentially causing symptoms of thyroid gland dysfunction and affecting fetal growth during pregnancy. The most sensitive individuals include pregnant women and their fetuses, lactating women, especially those who are getting less than a sufficient amount of iodine, infants, and individuals with thyroid problems.

Barstow area residents who have been advised not to consume tap water should not use tap water to drink, cook, mix beverages, brush teeth, or in any other way that would bring water into their bodies. This water can be used for bathing, laundry, and cleaning, including washing dishes.

The County of San Bernardino Department of Public Health and the California Department of Public Health will continue to monitor the situation in the Barstow area and share important information with the public.

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