

## **Tier 2 Notice – FAQ’s Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q. Is the water in the East Valley Water District system safe?**

A. Yes. Your water is safe to drink.

**Q. Can you explain the notice I just received about our drinking water?**

A. East Valley Water District, like all water districts in the state, are regulated and monitored by the California Department of Public Health. After analyzing cumulative water samples taken over a four-quarter period in 2009, it was discovered that one of the District’s wells registered 16 pCi/L of Gross Alpha. The Maximum Contamination Level (MCL) is 15 pCi/L. The California Department of Public Health notified the District of this finding on April 14, 2010, and the well was shut off immediately. Prior to its shutoff, the water from this well was immediately blended with water from other wells in the distribution system. The actual Gross Alpha your tap received varies, but was likely below the Maximum Contamination Level.

**Q. What is pCi/L?**

A. This refers to picocurie [pē-kō -cure-ee], which is a measurement unit to determine the MCL, or Maximum Contaminant Level. A single picocurie is one trillionth of a curie

**Q. What is the MCL?**

A. The MCL is the abbreviation for Maximum Contaminant Level, which refers to the highest level of a particular contaminant that is allowed in drinking water.

**Q. What is Gross Alpha?**

A. The term “gross” in this use means “total.” Alpha particles are found naturally in the earth’s crust, and emitted during the decay of certain substances, such as radium [**rey**-dee-uh m], uranium [yoo-**rey**-nee-uh m] and thorium [**thawr**-ee-uh m]. Most of the gross alpha radioactivity found in the drinking water in this District is from uranium.

**Q. What is Uranium and what is its connection to Gross Alpha?**

A. The first step in determining the level of Uranium in drinking water is the “short term gross alpha test.” Detection of alpha particles in the water signals the presence of specific radioactive substances, possibly uranium and radium 226. Uranium decays quickly, and, therefore, only those analyses that are conducted soon after collection will include the contribution from uranium. There are other radioactive substances, besides uranium, that may contribute to the gross alpha radiation in water. An analysis for these substances is usually not necessary.

**Q. What should I do now that Gross Alpha samples above the standard have been found in our water?**

A. Naturally occurring levels of radiation in drinking water are generally not considered to be a health emergency. Although it is not necessary for you to do anything, it’s important to be informed.

**Q. Did this issue cause an immediate health risk to customers?**

A. No. Occasionally there is some limited risk to people who drink water containing Gross Alpha in excess of the MCL over many years. The estimated health risks from low levels of uranium are small, and short term exposures pose only extremely small levels of risk. If there had been an urgent concern, customers would have been notified immediately.

**Q. What are the health risks associated with ingestion of too much Gross Alpha?**

A. The risks to health from Gross Alpha in water do not represent a health emergency and Gross Alpha can be readily controlled by treating the water or finding a supply with lower levels. As an example, the risk associated with consuming water containing 5 pCi/L of Gross Alpha for one year is comparable to one chest X-ray, or the cosmic radiation received during about five round trip flights across the country.

**Q. What if I have a severely compromised immune system?**

A. Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. People with severely compromised immune systems should seek advice from their health care providers.

**Q. Is there a medical test to determine exposure to alpha particles?**

A. There are tests that can detect the presence of alpha-emitting radionuclides [rey-dee-oh-noo-klahyd] in the body following an internal contamination event. They require special equipment and testing is generally done by specialized laboratories and facilities or hospitals. Contact your health care provider for more information.

**Q. How long was I receiving Gross Alpha contaminated water before the well was turned off?**

A. The well was turned off on April 14, 2010, immediately after receiving notice from the California Department of Public Health. The testing of the well that registered above the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for Gross Alpha was conducted over a four-quarter period throughout 2009.

**Q. How did East Valley Water District respond to the problem?**

A. The well was turned off immediately, after being notified by the California Department of Public Health. The well will not produce water for distribution until it is tested multiple times and the Gross Alpha result is below the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) repeatedly or a treatment unit to remove uranium is installed on the well.

**Q. How often is routine testing done?**

A. East Valley Water Districts tests wells and the distribution systems daily. We routinely monitor for the presence of more than 50 contaminants by taking more than 1,000 samples in any given year. East Valley Water District is committed to providing safe and reliable water to our customers.

**Q. How can I find out if my tap water is safe to drink?**

A. The water provided to customers by East Valley Water District must meet the requirements of both the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the California Department of Public Health. We are committed to a stringent testing program, where all of the lab results are forwarded to the California Department of Public Health. The results are compiled in a summary called the "Consumer Confidence Report," which is mailed to all customers and posted on the District's website [www.eastvalley.org](http://www.eastvalley.org). The 2009 edition was mailed on May 12, 2010.

**Q. What's the point of telling me about this after the fact?**

A. We are required by law to inform our customers of any contamination levels over standards, even if there is no presumed health risk. As our customer, you have a right to know what happened and what we are doing to remedy the situation.

**Q. I read the contaminated water sample results were received in 2009. The well was turned off April 14, 2010. How is that considered an "immediate" response?**

A. Gross Alpha testing conducted over a four-quarter period throughout 2009 indicated results over the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL). Additional testing was conducted in early 2010 to gather more information. All data was provided to the California Department of Public Health, which calculated a cumulative result and then notified East Valley Water District of the exceeded levels on April 14, 2010. That same day, we turned off the well that exceeded State standards.

**Q. As a customer, do I need to do anything right now?**

A. No, the Gross Alpha contamination has been contained and customers do not need to take any precautions. You can be assured your drinking water is safe.

**Q. How will I know if my water isn't safe to drink in the future?**

A. As in this case, if at any time, the water does not meet EPA or California Department of Public Health standards, you will be notified by mail or through the local media. There will also be updated information on our website.

**Q. Is there anything I can do to help keep our water clean and safe?**

A. Be conscientious and proactive by preventing pollution. Do not dispose of hazardous substances into our waterways. Never dump residual hazardous materials down drains or on the ground. Always follow product warning labels and obey state and local regulations.

**Q. Where can I find more information?**

A. Go to: [www.eastvalley.org](http://www.eastvalley.org) OR [www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov) (the California Department of Public Health's website includes a section on Drinking Water Standards) OR [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) (the United States Environmental Protection Agency's website includes information about the Clean Water Act and more).