Important information about chromium-6 in drinking water

The California Department of Public Health released a draft MCL in which it is proposing to reduce the allowed level of chromium-6 in drinking water to 10 parts per billion (ppb). This is five times stricter than the current California standard for total chromium of 50 ppb. The national standard is 100 ppb. **Please read the following facts and call CVWD at (760) 398-2651 if you have questions.**

Where does chromium-6 found locally come from? Natural sources of chromium-6 are found in water, soil, rocks and food. Chromium-6 is common in sediments located close to the San Andreas Fault system that delineates the Coachella Valley groundwater basin. The erosion of these sediments over many years dissolves chromium-6 into local groundwater. Chromium-6 occurs naturally in Coachella Valley groundwater, which is the source of your drinking water.

How much chromium is in our water? Groundwater levels of chromium-6 in CVWD’s boundaries average 9 ppb (the range is from non-detect to 21 ppb). Colorado River water that is used to replenish the valley’s aquifer has no detectable chromium-6. One part per billion is equal to one drop in 10,000 gallons.

What does this mean for me? If the proposal for chromium-6 is adopted, about half of the drinking water CVWD delivers is expected to be above this new standard. Early estimates indicate the additional treatment required to meet the new standard will cost more than $500 per customer per year. CVWD believes this additional expense is not economically feasible for our customers.

What happens next? The release of the draft MCL sets in motion a 45-day comment period during which members of the public may submit written feedback on the proposal. It is possible the proposed MCL could change and then be recirculated for more public comment. CVWD will be submitting comments that encourage the state to adopt a higher standard that continues to protect public health while being more economically feasible to meet.

Anyone with an opinion on the proposed MCL and its potential impacts is encouraged to submit a written comment to the California Department of Public Health by the Oct. 11 deadline. Instructions are available at www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/drinkingwater/Pages/Chromium6.aspx.

**CVWD will host a free educational workshop** to discuss these issues and potential impacts to future water rates on Oct. 7 at 6 p.m. at the Steve Robbins Administration Building, 75-515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert. Attendees will be given an opportunity to share their opinions with elected board members. No RSVP needed. **Providing high quality drinking water is CVWD’s top priority.**
Additional information:

What is an MCL and why is it being established? An MCL (Maximum Contaminant Level) is an enforceable regulatory standard for drinking water set by the California Department of Public Health. The MCL is intended to prevent potential long-term health effects based on consuming tap water for a 70-year period. It is supposed to balance protecting public health with a standard that’s economically and technologically feasible for water agencies to meet. The chromium-6 MCL was released on Aug. 22, 2013, and is the nation’s first draft MCL for chromium-6 in drinking water.

Why is chromium-6 a concern? California has enforced an MCL for total chromium since the 1970s. The state began the process to set a separate standard for chromium-6 in 2001 after legislation was approved requiring the state adopt a chromium-6 MCL for drinking water. The legislation was triggered by concerns about health research findings based on rodent studies that indicated chromium-6 could cause cancer when ingested in very large quantities.