



## INFORMATION REGARDING ARSENIC IN WELLS LOCATED IN THE LOWER COACHELLA VALLEY

Some wells in parts of the lower Coachella Valley produce water with elevated levels of arsenic. The primary area where this occurs is approximately bound by Ave. 66 on the north, the county line on the south, the Whitewater River on the east, and the mountains on the west. Additionally, some wells in the Mecca area have elevated arsenic. Below are answers to common questions regarding arsenic in well water.

### **Q: What is Arsenic?**

Arsenic is a naturally occurring element sometimes found in rocks, soils and waters that come into contact with these soils and rocks. It is odorless and cannot be tasted.

### **Q: Is arsenic harmful to me and my family?**

Long term consumption of water with elevated arsenic levels can cause potential health effects since it is a known human carcinogen (a cancer causing agent). It may also adversely affect the vascular system (arteries & veins) in humans and may be associated with the development of diabetes. Note that the concentrations of arsenic found in the well water in the Lower Valley will not cause acute arsenic poisoning.

### **Q: What are “elevated levels”?**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established a level of 10 parts per billion (ppb) as a Maximum Contamination Level (MCL) for arsenic. Wells in the lower Coachella Valley can range from approximately 0 ppb to 100 ppb.

### **Q: How do I know if there is arsenic in my water?**

If you are connected to a public water system, you should check with the operator of that system. If you are on a private well or unregulated water system (less than 4 connections), you should have your water tested. The Environmental Health Department recommends testing your water annually for bacteria and anything else that is a concern (like arsenic). Contact Riverside County Department of Environmental Health for a list of certified laboratories that are qualified to do such testing.

### **Q: What do I do if I find I have elevated arsenic levels in my water?**

Do not attempt to remove arsenic by boiling the water. Water for drinking and cooking should come from an approved source of bottled water, or an approved “point of use” treatment unit. “Point of use” units treat water at the tap. The National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) is a nonprofit organization that develops standards for products that can treat water to remove arsenic (and other undesirable constituents). Following the installation of any treatment device, it is recommended additional testing to ensure



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effectiveness. For more information or a list of NSF certified devices, contact the organization at 877-8-NSF-HELP, visit the website at [www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org), or confirm with the manufacturer that the unit is NSF approved for the removal of arsenic.

Water with elevated arsenic is considered to be safe for non-consumptive uses such as washing and bathing as long as it meets other potable water standards. Additional information on arsenic can be obtained from the Riverside County Environmental Health Department at (760) 393-3390.

\*Document available in an alternate format upon request

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