



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Water Department

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WATER DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES PRESS AVAILABILITY TO DISCUSS HEALTH SERVICES CITATION

The City of San Diego Water Department will be available to speak with the press at 10 a.m on Wednesday, January 12, 2005, to discuss the recent citation it received from the California Department of Health Services (CDHS). During the press availability session, which will be at the 5900 block of Desert View Drive in La Jolla, Department Director Frank Belock will make a statement and answer questions.

Due to a reporting error and a suspected sampling error, a Primary (health-related) Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) was exceeded and the Water Department failed to report this finding to the CDHS in a timely manner. The CDHS is requiring the Water Department to notify residents of this error via a direct mailing, and to place a notice in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*.

“We regret this error very much and are taking the necessary steps to make sure it never happens again,” said Mr. Belock. “We also want to assure everyone that the drinking water is perfectly safe.”

On November 8, 2004, a routine water sample collected on Desert View Drive in La Jolla tested positive for total coliform bacteria. The Federal and State laws allow for a very low rate of positive total coliform occurrences. A single positive sample is not an MCL violation, nor is it necessarily an indication of problems in the water system. However, whenever total coliforms are detected, the law requires repeat samples to be taken at nearby locations.

On November 12, 2004, a repeat sample on Desert View Drive was found to contain *E. coli*, a form of coliform bacteria. This sampling result triggered the primary MCL violation. Because repeat samples taken along Desert View Drive on November 13, 2004, and 467 other samples taken from throughout the water system in November did not contain *E. coli*, and because all samples had good disinfectant levels, the Water Department suspected a sampling error had occurred. Based on this, the Water Department reported the positive test as part of a monthly report and not within 24 hours as the CDHS requires. The Water Department received the citation for the MCL violation and for failing to notify the CDHS within the required 24-hour period.

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