

Honolulu Board of Water Supply

News Release

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E. COLI BACTERIA DETECTED IN WAIHEE TUNNEL WATER SOURCE *Water is safe to drink; it is disinfected before entering drinking water system.*

HONOLULU – The Board of Water Supply (BWS) is notifying residents that a water sample taken from its Waihee Tunnel water source has tested positive for the presence of E.coli bacteria. As a result, the BWS is providing public notice of the finding, as required under the federal Ground Water Rule. **The water from this source is safe to drink because it is routinely disinfected before it reaches customers. For this reason, no further action is required by customers.** The Waihee Tunnel water source serves the Ahuimanu, Heeia, Kahaluu, Kaneohe, Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Maunawili, and Kailua areas.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the Ground Water Rule is a regulatory process aimed to reduce the potential risk of illness caused by microbial contamination in ground water. Under the Rule, utilities must test their ground water when coliform is detected in any sample collected from the water system. If E. coli is found in the ground water source, the rule requires the public to be notified. **E. coli detection is not a rule violation,** but the rule requires that the public be notified of the detection.

On August 20, 2015, a water sample collected at Waihee Tunnel the day before tested positive for E. coli. On August 21, 2015, the BWS returned to the site to take five additional samples. Of those five additional samples, **only one tested positive for E. coli bacteria.** BWS is collecting additional water samples today as part of its investigation to determine the cause of the E. coli finding.

E. coli bacteria can exist in tropical, sub-tropical, and temperate soil and may persist in soil for a number of years. E. coli are also bacteria whose presence can indicate that the water may be contaminated with human or animal wastes. Microbes in these wastes can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. They may pose a special health risk for infants, young children, some of the elderly, and people with severely compromised immune systems.

(more)

Residents who would like more information about the situation should contact BWS Water Quality Laboratory Director Owen Narikawa at 748-5851 or 271-1393 (cell phone).

The BWS conducts thousands of water quality tests throughout the year to protect public health and ensure Oahu's water meets Federal and State drinking water standards.

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About the Board of Water Supply

The Board of Water Supply (BWS), a semi-autonomous agency of the City and County of Honolulu, manages Oahu's municipal water resources and distribution system. As the largest water utility in the State, the BWS serves approximately one million customers on Oahu. The BWS embraces its mission of "Water for Life – *Ka Wai Ola*"—to provide a safe and dependable water supply, now and into the future. The BWS works to accomplish its mission and strategic objectives while striving to maintain the public trust to protect the quality and sustainability of our precious water resources. *Uwē ka lani, ola ka honua* – "When the heavens weep, the earth lives." For more information, visit www.boardofwatersupply.com.

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