

## Is My Drinking Water Really Safe?

Yes, we take our responsibility to provide safe drinking water very seriously. Like you, we drink the same water and share the same concerns about its quality. Islandwide, the Board of Water Supply (BWS) operates over 94 water sources that are located among nine different water regions. Your tap water generally comes from those sources located within your area and not from all 94. The report shows the name of the source(s) serving your area and the region it is located in.

Each year, these sources and systems are tested for more than 80 different types of contaminants by the BWS.

**The sources serving your area did not contain any of the listed contaminants except for the ones shown on the report. In all cases, the amounts found are fully compliant with the standards for safe drinking water.**

## Drinking Water Standards and Testing

In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) prescribes regulations which limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations establish limits for contaminants in bottled water which must provide the same protection for public health. A contaminant is any substance that may pose a potential health concern if present in very large quantities.

The regulations require testing tap water for many different categories of contaminants. One category is the regulated or primary contaminants. Each has a maximum contaminant goal and maximum contaminant level. The **Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG)** is the level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLGs allow for a margin of safety. The **Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL)** is the highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. This limit is the standard for safe drinking water and is set by federal and/or state health agencies. MCLs are set as close to the MCLGs as feasible using the best available treatment technology.

The regulations also have testing requirements for certain unregulated contaminants. Health agencies generally do not specify MCLs or MCLGs for unregulated contaminants. However, they may establish an **action level** which is the concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements that a water system must follow.

The rules also require testing the water in the distribution system (for trihalomethanes and coliform bacteria) and at the consumer's tap (for lead and copper).

Each contaminant category has its own monitoring frequency established by regulation. Generally, testing is performed annually. If a contaminant is detected, then testing is done quarterly. Monitoring for certain contaminants (such as alpha and beta activity) is performed less than once a year because the amount present does not change frequently. For this reason, some of the data can be more than a year old.

## Where Does My Water Come From?

The sources of drinking water (both tap water and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. On Oahu, drinking water begins as rain falling over the Koolau and Waianae Mountain ranges. Because volcanic rock is porous, much of this rain is naturally filtered through the ground on its way to large underground formations called aquifers.

As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally-occurring minerals, radioactive material, and substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activity.

Source Water Assessments, reports that evaluate the susceptibility of our drinking water sources to pollution, have been completed as of 2004. These reports are available for review by calling Erwin Kawata at (808) 748-5080.

## BWS Water Sources and Systems

The Board of Water Supply operates and maintains over 94 water sources that combine to deliver an average of 145 million gallons of water per day.

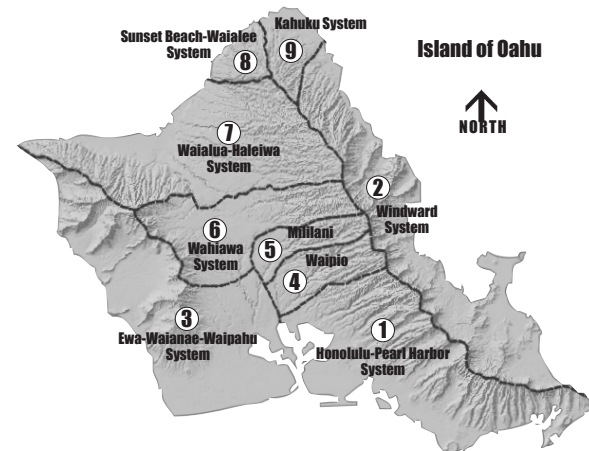
The water is supplied through a distribution system that contains over 2,100 miles of pipeline and 171 reservoirs. The entire system is monitored 24 hours a day.

## What Kinds of Contaminants are a Concern to Drinking Water?

Contaminants that may be present in source water include:

**Microbial contaminants**, such as viruses and bacteria, which may come from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, and wildlife.

**Inorganic contaminants**, such as salts and metals, which can be naturally-occurring or result from urban stormwater runoff, industrial or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming.



**Pesticides and herbicides**, which may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban stormwater runoff, and residential uses.

**Organic chemical contaminants**, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals, which are by-products of industrial processes and petroleum production, and can also come from gas stations, urban stormwater runoff, and septic systems.

**Radioactive contaminants**, which can be naturally-occurring or be the result of oil and gas production and mining activities.

Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants.

The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline 1-800-426-4791 or the DOH at (808) 586-4258.

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immuno-compromised individuals such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants can be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their healthcare providers. EPA/CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by cryptosporidium are available from the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791 or the DOH at (808) 586-4258.

## What Kinds of Contaminants Have Been Found in Oahu's Water?

Below is a list of substances that have been found in Oahu's water and their possible sources. See the water quality report for the substances found in your water. In all cases, the amounts present are fully compliant with the standards.

**Alpha and beta activity** occur naturally in groundwater from the erosion of natural deposits and decay of natural and man-made deposits.

**Antimony** is found in discharge from petroleum refineries, fire retardants, ceramics, electronics, and solder.

**Arsenic** may occur from the erosion of natural deposits; runoff from orchards, runoff from glass, and electronics production wastes.

**Atrazine** may occur from runoff from herbicide used on row crops.

**Barium** may occur naturally in groundwater from the erosion of natural deposits.

**Boron** is a mineral found in food and the environment. It occurs naturally in rocks, soil, and seawater and is also used in vitamin supplements.

**Bromide** occurs naturally in the environment and is not being considered for regulation.

**Carbon tetrachloride** is an organic chemical that may occur in drinking water from discharge from chemical plants and other industrial activities.

**Chlorate** is a byproduct of the drinking water disinfection process that forms when using sodium hypochlorite. According to EPA, chlorate levels more than 210 parts per billion may be a health concern.

**Chlordane** is a residue of a banned termiticide.

**Chloride** is a common element in the environment that occurs widely in soils, plants, water, and foods. It is most commonly found in nature as a salt of sodium called sodium chloride better known as table salt.

**Chlorodifluoromethane** also known as R-22, is a gas used for cooling in refrigeration and air conditioning systems.

**Chromium** may occur naturally in groundwater from the erosion of natural deposits.

**Copper** may occur in tap water from new or the corrosion of household copper plumbing systems, erosion of natural deposits, or leaching from wood preservatives.

**Di (2-ethylhexyl) phthalate** is found in discharge from rubber and chemical factories.

**Dibromochloropropane (DBCP)** is an organic chemical formerly used in Hawaii as a soil fumigant in pineapple

cultivation and a petroleum additive. It has been found in several groundwater wells in Central Oahu.

**1,2-Dichloropropane** (DCP) is an organic chemical used as a solvent and pesticide that may occur in drinking water by leaching into groundwater. It also may come from improper waste disposal and discharge from industrial chemical factories.

**Dieldrin** is an organic chemical once used as a pesticide for controlling ground termites and may occur in drinking water by leaching into groundwater.

**Ethylene dibromide** (EDB) is an organic chemical formerly used in Hawaii as a soil fumigant in pineapple cultivation and petroleum additive. It has been found in some groundwater wells in Central Oahu.

**Fecal coliform bacteria** and **E. Coli** can be found in human and animal fecal waste and may also be found in soil.

**Fluoride** occurs naturally in groundwater. According to EPA, it may also come from the erosion of natural deposits or discharged from fertilizer and aluminum factories. It can be a water additive that promotes strong teeth. BWS does not add fluoride.

**Haloacetic Acids** (HAA) and **Total Trihalomethanes** (TTHMs)[such as bromoform, bromodichloromethane, and dibromochloromethane] are by-products of drinking water chlorination.

**Heptachlor epoxide** is an organic chemical formed by the chemical and biological transformation of heptachlor in the environment. Heptachlor was once used as a non-agricultural insecticide. Heptachlor and its epoxide adsorbs strongly to soil.

**Hexavalent chromium** also known as chromium 6 is a chemical form of chromium that occurs naturally in rocks, animals, plants, soil, and in volcanic dust and gases. Water sources can be affected by hexavalent chromium naturally, or through contamination plumes from industrial centers, landfills, and improper discharge of industrial processing streams. EPA has not yet determined if low levels of hexavalent chromium in drinking water are a health risk.

**Lead**—If present, elevated levels of lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. BWS is responsible for providing high quality drinking water, but cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components. When your water has been sitting for several hours, you can minimize the potential for lead exposure by flushing your tap for 30 seconds to 2 minutes before using water for drinking or cooking. If you are

concerned about lead in your water, you may choose to have your water tested by contacting private laboratories that are certified by the State for doing drinking water analyses. Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure is available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline or at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/lead>.

**Methyl t-Butyl Ether** (MTBE) is used in gasoline to reduce auto emissions.

**Nitrate** (as nitrogen) occurs naturally in groundwater. According to EPA, nitrates may come from runoff from fertilizer use or leaching from septic tanks, sewage, or erosion of natural deposits. Nitrate in drinking water at levels above 10 parts per million (ppm) is a health risk for infants of less than six months of age. High nitrate levels in drinking water can cause blue baby syndrome. Nitrate levels may rise quickly for short periods of time because of rainfall or agricultural activity. If you are caring for an infant, you should ask for advice from your health care provider if the nitrate level is between 5 to 10 ppm.

**Nitrite** (as nitrogen) occurs naturally in groundwater. According to EPA, nitrites may come from runoff from fertilizer use or leaching from septic tanks, sewage, or erosion of natural deposits. Nitrite levels in drinking water in excess of the MCL could cause serious illness or be fatal to infants below the age of six months.

**Radium** occurs naturally in groundwater from the erosion of natural deposits.

**Radon** is a naturally-occurring radioactive substance found everywhere on earth. It is a colorless, odorless gas produced from the natural decomposition of uranium. Because radon is a gas, it can move from water to the air in the course of dishwashing, showering, and other water-using activities. In the atmosphere, radon is harmless because it is diluted. However, in enclosed spaces such as basements, radon levels can build up. Appropriate ventilation is the best way to prevent indoor air accumulation of radon.

**Selenium** is found in discharge from petroleum and metal refineries, erosion of natural deposits, and discharge from mines.

**Simazine** may occur from herbicide runoff.

**Sodium** is a common element in the environment that occurs widely in soils, plants, water, and foods. It is also found in personal care products, foods, nutritional supplements, and medications.

**Strontium** is an alkaline earth metal that occurs naturally in the environment. Air, dust, soil, foods, and drinking water all contain small amounts of strontium. Ingestion of small amounts of strontium is not harmful. According to EPA, strontium levels more than 4000 parts per billion per day may lead to negative health effects. There is no evidence that drinking water with trace amounts of naturally-occurring strontium is harmful.

**Tetrachloroethylene** (PCE) is an organic chemical that may come from leaching from PVC pipes, discharge from factories, and dry cleaners.

**Total coliform bacteria** are naturally present in the environment.

**Trichloroethylene** (TCE) is an organic chemical that may come from metal degreasing sites and other factories.

**1,2,3-Trichloropropane** (TCP) is an organic chemical formerly used as a soil fumigant in agriculture and as a gasoline additive. It has been found in a number of wells in Central Oahu.

**Uranium** occurs from the erosion of natural deposits.

**Vanadium** is a metal that naturally occurs in many different minerals and in fossil fuel deposits. Exposure to vanadium is very common, as it is a naturally occurring element that is found in many parts of the environment including at low levels in many foods. According to EPA, levels more than 21 parts per billion per day may lead to negative health effects. There is no federal drinking water standard for vanadium at this time.

### Where Can I Get More Information?

Visit our web site at [boardofwatersupply.com](http://boardofwatersupply.com) or call Erwin Kawata at (808) 748-5080 or Owen Narikawa at (808) 748-5851. You can also reach us by e-mail at [contactus@hbws.org](mailto:contactus@hbws.org).

For information about the following topics, call:

#### Environmental Protection Agency

Federal drinking water regulations, health effects

Safe Drinking Water Hotline ..... 1-800-426-4791

#### Board of Water Supply

Communications Office ..... (808) 748-5041

Water testing program (chemicals) ..... (808) 748-5840

Microbiology testing/chlorine taste ..... (808) 748-5850

Copies of your Water Quality Report ..... (808) 748-5041

#### State Department of Health

State and Federal drinking water standards, Hawaii drinking water monitoring/compliance, health effects

Safe Drinking Water Branch..... (808) 586-4258

### How Can I Get Involved?

The Board meets at 2:00 p.m. on the fourth Monday of each month at the Board of Water Supply, 630 South Beretania Street, Honolulu, Hawaii. You are invited to participate in these meetings. For copies of Board meeting schedules and minutes, call (808) 748-5061 or visit [www.boardofwatersupply.com](http://www.boardofwatersupply.com).

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# WATER QUALITY REPORT

## Supplemental Information

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A separate report, containing the results of tests performed on samples of your water, accompanies this Supplemental Information.



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