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Tom Mulvihill April GM Column

ARSENIC TREATMENT BY THE IWVWD

In 2007, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reduced allowable arsenic levels in drinking water from 50 parts per billion (ppb) to 10. (According to hydrogeologist Dr. Pierre Saint-Amand, this amount is similar to dissolving a baby aspirin in an Olympic sized pool.) Simply put, the level of arsenic in our water has not changed. However, the standard has.

In 2008, the District received notice from the California Department of Public Health that two of our wells exceeded this new Federal Arsenic Rule: Well 9A, located near Primavera and Ward and Well 13, near Mahan and Las Flores. Both wells are being used on a limited basis – only when absolutely necessary. It should be noted that when they are in use, most customers will receive water that has been mixed with water from other wells in the system.

This is not an emergency. There is no need to purchase and drink bottled water as some of our customers have inquired. Valley residents can continue using District water safely, including water from wells identified as exceeding the new arsenic rule.

The IWVWD's long term plan for arsenic treatment was developed during a special Board of Directors workshop in late 2005. Since then, the Board and staff remained open to newly emerging technologies even while proceeding with the development of treatment facilities that would use the best available technology for our water's unique conditions.

Three firms completed pilot testing at four District wells in the summer of 2007. These firms were then invited to submit quotes for their equipment and operating costs. In July of 2008, the District awarded the selection of equipment and removal media to Filtronics, Inc., the lowest responsible bidder. We are now preparing bidding documents for the selection of a firm or firms to construct the plant and related facilities.

The Water District continues to work closely with the California Department of Public Health during implementation of arsenic treatment. Until the permanent facilities are operational in 2010, our staff will be mailing notices quarterly to all our customers advising which wells currently in use have exceeded the new Federal Standard for arsenic.

The IWVWD considers your health and safety to be of the utmost importance. We are here to serve you.