

# Tap Water You Can Trust



Answers to common questions  
about tap water



Coachella Valley Water District ♦ (760) 398-2651  
[www.cvwd.org](http://www.cvwd.org) ♦ [www.waterfun4kids.org](http://www.waterfun4kids.org)

## Do you know where your drinking water comes from?

- CVWD provides high quality drinking water to nearly 108,000 homes and businesses, from wells drilled into a natural groundwater basin.
- More than 100 wells pump groundwater into pipes for immediate delivery to homes and businesses. Groundwater that is not used immediately is stored in enclosed reservoirs for later use.
- CVWD reservoirs are secured sites primarily located in elevated locations, allowing gravity to provide water pressure to customers' homes.



The 43-foot high reservoir pictured above is the district's largest. It can store up to 12 million gallons of water and serves communities in south La Quinta.

# High Quality Water



Coachella Valley Water District is committed to providing high quality drinking water that meets stringent government standards.

CVWD produces an annual water quality report that documents that the water served to all CVWD users (obtained from wells drilled into the Coachella Valley's groundwater basin) meets state and federal drinking water quality standards.

To obtain a copy of the most recent water quality report visit [www.cvwd.org](http://www.cvwd.org) or call (760) 398-2661, ext. 2549.

The district is tasked with ensuring that CVWD drinking water meets these standards. Highly trained employees monitor the water systems and collect drinking water samples that are tested at the district's state-certified laboratory.

A few specialized tests are performed by other certified laboratories. In addition to the detected constituents listed in CVWD's water quality report, the district's Water Quality staff monitors for more than 100 other regulated and unregulated chemicals.



**If for some reason your water did not meet health and safety regulations, you would be notified immediately.**

# Warm water in the summer



## Why is warm water coming out of my cold faucet?

This is a common question during the summer, especially from new desert residents. When the hot summer sun bakes the earth, the heated ground warms the pipes that deliver water to your home. Desert summer temperatures can range from approximately 100 to 120 degrees.

## Is the water warmer in specific areas of the valley?

The less that water circulates through a system, the warmer it is likely to be. For example, if your residence is in a partially developed neighborhood, your water may be warmer than if you live in a fully developed neighborhood where more water is being used on a consistent basis.

## What is CVWD doing about warm water?

Unfortunately, this summer phenomenon is a fact of life in the desert. Past experiments with burying water pipes as deep as five feet below ground showed no appreciable difference in the water temperature.

## What can I do about warm water coming out of my cold faucet?

If you experience warm water coming out of your cold faucet, try running the tap for a short time to clear the warm water within your home. If the temperature does not drop within one minute, it is doubtful that continual flushing will improve the situation.

The best solution is to place a pitcher of tap water in the refrigerator for a ready supply of cold drinking water.

In some rare cases, during extreme conditions, water can come out of the cold water tap as high as 100 degrees.





# Looks, Tastes & Smells

## Why does my tap water look cloudy?

Occasionally, tiny air bubbles in tap water cause a cloudy appearance. Air dissolves into water when pressurized which occurs in the groundwater basin and in the water pipes that deliver water to your tap.

**Is it OK to drink when cloudy?** The bubbles are harmless and pose no health risk. The air bubbles will dissipate if you let the water sit in a glass for a few minutes.

## Why are there particles in my water?

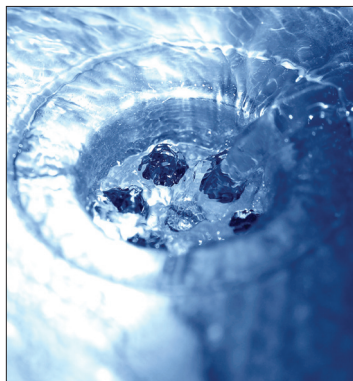
The Coachella Valley's drinking water comes from a vast underground aquifer. The wells that pump the water from the aquifer into the delivery system are designed to filter out sand. These particles typically settle in large water pipes and tanks, but sometimes make it through the faucet.

**What if the amount of particles increases?** Repairs to water pipes and the use of fire hydrants (for fighting fires or construction use) can stir up the particles resting in the pipe and typically cause a temporary increase in sand. When this happens, allowing the sand to settle and then flushing your faucets will remove the sand.

In rare cases, sand particles can represent an on-going nuisance. If you experience this, call the water district for an inspection.

## Why does tap water sometimes smell funny?

When your water tastes or smells funny, the problem may be in the water or it may not. Odors might actually be coming from your sink drain where bacteria grow on hair, soap, food and other things that get trapped. Gases in the drain that smell get stirred up when water pours into the pipe. Odor also can come from bacteria growing in devices such as water heaters.



The list on the next page tells where most of the odd smells come from and how to eliminate them.

## How often is CVWD tap water tested?

◆ CVWD tests over 15,000 water samples each year to ensure that your drinking water meets state and federal standards.

◆ Every year, some of these samples are analyzed for more than 100 regulated and unregulated substances. This required monitoring adds to the cost of providing water.

◆ Highly trained employees monitor the water systems and collect water samples that are tested at the district's state-certified laboratory,

◆ Some specialized tests are performed by other certified laboratories.

**A faint chlorine smell** A small amount of chlorine is added to meet drinking water regulations. It is a disinfectant that is used to provide continuous protection against possible microbial contamination. Regulations limit the amount of chlorine added to tap water so that the water is safe to drink. A slight smell or taste of chlorine is normal.

**Tip** An easy way to reduce the chlorine smell is to let water sit in a glass for a few minutes. Then, put the water in a covered container and chill in the refrigerator. Cold water tastes and smells better than water at room temperature.

**Rotten eggs/sulfur smell** This smell can occur under some conditions when sulfate is present in the water supply. Circumstances that may contribute to this odor are improperly maintained water heaters or lack of water circulation within a residence during warmer months.

**Tip** If the odor is only present in hot water, then the odor may be a result of sulfur-reducing bacteria growing in the water heater tank and may be addressed by routine use and increasing the water heater's temperature.

## What affects the taste of my water?

The taste of drinking water is affected by its mineral content as well as the presence of chlorine, which is used to protect against potential bacterial contamination.

Sometimes plumbing can cause a metallic flavor, especially if water has been sitting in pipes unused for several days. Taste, however, does not indicate a higher or lower degree of water quality.



## What is added to tap water before it is delivered to customers?

A small amount of chlorine, equivalent to less than one drop of household bleach per gallon, is added to most water sources to ensure tap water delivered to homes meets standards for bacteria.

The standard for bacteria is one of more than 100 standards for domestic water established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



# Minerals & deposits

## Why does tap water leave spots on my glasses and showerhead?

Several types of minerals can be attributed to tap water. Minerals containing calcium and magnesium are common in local groundwater supplies and are responsible for the white spots observed when tap water is allowed to dry on household surfaces. While these spots may be unwelcome, these naturally occurring minerals in your tap water provide protective internal coating deemed optimum for controlling corrosion of your home's water pipes and plumbing fixtures.

The most common mineral deposits are lime, rust and calcium. Mineral deposits that are allowed to accumulate over time on household surfaces can become more problematic to remove. Routine household maintenance such as wiping water droplets from surfaces before evaporation occurs can help prevent mineral deposits.

- 🔥 Lime deposits form when tap water is heated in appliances such as coffee pots and water heaters.
- 🔥 Rust comes from deposits of iron, in one compound or another that have oxidized. Iron can be present in groundwater, or may be leeching into water from other sources. Rust may also be a result of an older water heater that contains iron. Rust stains sinks, basins, showers, and clothes with an orange residue which is left behind by dissolved, oxidized iron particles.
- 🔥 Calcium combined with magnesium cause the hard white spots on dishes and bath fixtures. These minerals mixed with dirt, oils and soap also cause soap scum.

**Tip** To remove spots caused by mineral build up, fill your coffeepot or tea kettle with vinegar and let it sit overnight, this usually removes the spots. Rinse thoroughly before using. You can also soak your showerhead in a bowl filled with vinegar. There are some store products you can use to prevent spotting when glasses are washed and allowed to air dry.

All drinking water provided by CVWD meets state and federal drinking water quality standards.

## Is my tap water hard?

The level of hardness in tap water is determined by the amount of calcium and magnesium in the water, which are common minerals found in Coachella Valley groundwater supplies. The amount of hardness varies in the valley's drinking water and some areas do have hard water.

Most CVWD customers receive water with only a moderate hardness.

Turn to page 10 to learn more about water softeners and water treatments devices.

## I've heard there is arsenic in the water in the Eastern Coachella Valley. Is this true?

Arsenic is an odorless and tasteless mineral naturally found in plants, rocks, soil, air, animals and water. In the Coachella Valley, naturally occurring arsenic is commonly found in groundwater in Mecca, Oasis, Valerie Jean and North Shore at levels higher than current state and federal standards. Before drinking water is delivered to CVWD customers in these areas, it is treated at one of three water quality treatment facilities to lower the arsenic level and comply with all state and federal standards.

State and federal standards require average arsenic levels in tap water to not exceed 10 parts per billion. Ten parts per billion is the equivalent of one drop in 1,000 gallons.

**What if I am not a CVWD customer?** If you live in the eastern Coachella Valley and your tap water comes from a private well or water system, the level of arsenic in your tap water may exceed the state and federal water quality standards. If you own a private well, call CVWD's Water Quality section at (760) 398-2651 to schedule a free water quality test for arsenic. If you are a customer of a private water system, request the most recent water quality report from your water provider.



### What is CVWD doing about private wells?

There are private wells serving water systems in the eastern Coachella Valley currently not meeting government regulations.

CVWD's Board of Directors and staff are working closely with county and state elected officials to secure funding for additional water quality improvement projects in housing communities that depend on these private water systems.

Studies are underway to find the most feasible way to expand the district's delivery system to provide quality drinking water to more residents currently using private wells.

All drinking water provided by CVWD meets state and federal water quality standards. In the areas of Mecca, Oasis, Valerie Jean and North Shore, water is treated at one of three water quality treatment facilities to lower the arsenic level before delivery to customers.

## What factors contribute to the cost of my tap water?

### ◆ Rising treatment costs.

Increasingly stringent drinking water regulations have made it necessary for many water suppliers to invest in costly new treatment technologies. Which adds to the cost of providing water. Future water quality regulations will only increase testing and treatment costs.

### ◆ Aging water infrastructure.

CVWD's tap water system comprises nearly 2,000 miles of pipeline, 100 wells and 60 reservoirs. Much of the system was built decades ago. Upgrades & maintenance to our aging systems costs approximately \$12 million annually.

### ◆ Increasing energy costs.

It takes a lot of electricity to pump, treat and deliver water. CVWD pays approximately \$9.8 million annually in tap water-related energy costs.

Annual costs are based on the district's 2011-2012 budget.



# Naturally Occurring Elements

## Is there fluoride in my water?

CVWD does not add fluoride to the water. However, fluoride is a naturally occurring element found in local groundwater.

To find out how much fluoride your tap water contains, visit [www.cvwd.org](http://www.cvwd.org) to download a current copy of the annual Water Quality Report.



## Is there chromium-6 in tap water?

Natural sources of chromium-6 are found in water, soil, rocks and food. In the Coachella Valley, chromium-6 naturally exists in the valley's groundwater due to erosion of local sediments that contain chromium.

The current national standard for all forms of chromium is 100 parts per billion (ppb). The California standard is twice as strict at 50 ppb. The average chromium-6 level in drinking water provided by CVWD is 9 ppb. One part per billion is equal to 1 drop in 10,000 gallons of water.

California regulators are expected to use the public health goal based on a 2008 rodent study to develop a chromium-6 drinking water standard by 2014. The study found rodents that ingested chromium-6 levels above 20,000 ppb during their life-time showed an increased risk of developing cancer.

Scientists at federal agencies are reviewing more recent rodent studies that call into question some of the assumptions used to develop California's public health goal. They plan to complete this work in 2014 to determine if chromium-6 poses a health risk when consumed in low levels.

While state and federal regulators work to complete these studies, the district is evaluating chromium-6 removal at its existing water treatment facilities. In addition, the district is participating in a nationally funded study for testing technologies to remove chromium from drinking water supplies in the Coachella Valley.

This work will help ensure the water district is prepared to comply if regulators set a new chromium standard below current levels.



# Bottled Water, Filters & Water Softeners



## Should I buy bottled water?

Some people believe that bottled water is safer and more pure than tap water. Water purity is determined by the amount of constituents found in the water and by the level of treatment performed. For example, bottled water promoted as mineral water containing more dissolved solids than a tap water source would be considered less pure than tap water. In contrast, tap water might be less pure than bottled water that has been treated to remove dissolved solids. However, both sources are considered safe when drinking water standards are met. When the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets a new standard for tap water, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is now required to establish a new standard for the same constituent in bottled water or prove that EPA's new standard is not applicable to bottled water.

## Do I need to purchase a home treatment device to make my tap water safe?



Drinking water provided by the district meets all federal and state water quality standards.

Water filters may change the taste of tap water, but they are not necessary.

## How much money can I save by drinking tap water?

Some brands of bottled water use tap water from another area and are a much more expensive option than your own tap water. Water that is bottled or sold in vending machines or water stores costs up to a thousand times more per gallon than tap water. On average, 7,000 glasses of tap water costs a CVWD customer only \$1. When compared with other products we use every day, tap water is clearly the best deal around.

CVWD tap water costs less than a penny per gallon, which is a true bargain considering the energy, resources and expertise required to treat and deliver safe and reliable water to your home every day.



## Emergency Preparedness & Drinking Water

In the event of a natural disaster, such as an earthquake or severe flooding, CVWD's water delivery system could be compromised and you could be advised to not use tap water for any purpose or to boil the water before using it for drinking and cooking.

**Option 1** Your first choice for replacing tap water for drinking and cooking should be bottled water. Everyone should include in their emergency supply kit a 7-day supply of bottled water (at least 1 gallon of water per person per day, plus extra water for pets). You can purchase commercially bottled water or store your own.

**Option 2** If you don't have bottled water, you should use boiled tap water. Boiling water will kill most types of disease-causing organisms. If the water is unusually cloudy, murky or colored, filter it first through a clean cloth or allow it to settle and draw off the clear water for boiling. Then, bring to a rolling boil and leave for one minute.

*Continued on next page*



Most people do not need to purchase a home treatment device (water filter) to make water safe. That is because tap water already meets very strict regulations for quality. If, however, you are considering buying a home treatment device because of health concerns such as a severely compromised immune system, make sure that device is certified by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). CDPH certifies more than 350 home treatment devices that claim to remove toxic chemicals and provide better health protection.

All devices that make such claims must be state certified to be legally sold. For more information about their certification program call CDPH at (916) 449-5600 or visit <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/device/Pages/WTDDirectory.aspx>

### Do I need a water softener?

No. Coachella Valley Water District tap water meets all drinking water standards and does not need to be conditioned or filtered. CVWD does not prohibit the use of water softeners, but district ordinance does prohibit the discharge of excess salt down the drain. Discharged salt can harm the groundwater and may require additional treatment, which would increase future costs of providing sewer and water services.

If you choose to soften your water please check with your local water conditioning expert or the Pacific Water Quality Association to avoid installing a system that discharges excess salt down the drain.

**If you decide to purchase a home treatment device remember the following tips:**

- 🔥 Don't be fooled by sales demonstrations that show particles settling to the bottom of the glass of tap water. The particles you see are minerals that naturally occur in water.
- 🔥 Be cautious of any salespersons who claims that CVWD sent him/her to test your water. CVWD would never send a salesperson to your home.
- 🔥 Also be wary of those who test your water and claim that your water quality is unsafe. All drinking water provided by CVWD is safe to drink and meets all state and federal standards.
- 🔥 Home treatment devices have to be properly serviced to work properly. If they are not maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions, water from the device may be less safe than water straight from the tap.
- 🔥 Water that is treated by a home treatment device is usually more expensive when you take the cost of maintenance into account.
- 🔥 Make sure the device is designed to remove the things you are concerned about. Not all home treatment devices remove the same things.
- 🔥 If you have a severely weakened immune system, talk with your health care physician about the type of home treatment device that is best for you.



**Option 3** If you are unable to boil water, your next best choice is to disinfect it with household bleach. Bleach will kill some (but not all) types of disease-causing organisms. If the water is unusually cloudy, murky or colored, filter it first through a clean cloth or allow it to settle and draw off the clear water for disinfection. Then, add 1/8 teaspoon (or 8 drops) of regular, unscented liquid household bleach for each gallon of water, stir well and let it stand for 30 minutes before using. Store disinfected water in clean containers with covers.

**Never use** scented, powdered or swimming pool bleach. These products may contain dangerous amounts of chemicals not intended for consumption. A faint chlorine smell is normal.



## Still have questions about tap water?

CVWD produces an annual Water Quality Report that documents that the water served to all CVWD users (obtained from wells drilled into the Coachella Valley's vast groundwater basin) meets state and federal drinking water quality standards.

To obtain a copy of the most recent water quality report visit [www.cvwd.org](http://www.cvwd.org) or call (760) 398-2651 to have one mailed to you or to answer any questions you may have.



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85995 Avenue 52  
Coachella, CA 92236

75515 & 75525 Hovley Lane East  
Palm Desert, CA 92211



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