



Making a difference...together

Integrated Water Services
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Date: March 1, 2022

Re: Water Quality Advisory for Skana Water System

Dear Resident:

You are receiving this notice because this property is served by the Skana Water System. The Skana Water System is experiencing elevated concentrations of disinfection by-products (trihalomethanes and haloacetic acids) associated with the reaction between chlorine added for drinking water disinfection and organic compounds in the groundwater supply. The level of these disinfection by-products in the treated water can vary over time and depends on the concentration of organics in the source water, the chlorine concentration applied for water disinfection, and the contact time of free chlorine and organic compounds in the treated water.

There is no immediate risk to your health. Health effects from disinfection by-products are associated with consumption of high levels above the maximum thresholds for many years or decades and the elevated levels for Skana Water System are a recent phenomenon. Health Canada has set a maximum allowable concentration for trihalomethanes at 100 parts per billion (ppb) and the current levels are on average 107 ppb. The maximum allowable concentration for haloacetic acids is 80 ppb and the current levels are 101 ppb. A list of Frequently Asked Questions regarding these compounds is included with this letter.

The Capital Regional District (CRD) is working on strategies to reduce the concentration of these disinfection by-products while balancing the need to continue disinfection and ensure treated water is free of bacteria, viruses and other pathogens. Immediate, short term and long term strategies are being developed in consultation with Island Health. The timeline for medium and long term solutions will be contingent on available funds. The CRD will continue to provide information directly to residents as the issue is addressed, and updated information will be available on the CRD website at www.crd.bc.ca/skana-ws.

If you have any immediate concerns or questions, please contact the CRD (Matt McCrank, 250.940.7402, or mmccrank@crd.bc.ca) or Island Health at gateway_office@viha.ca.

Sincerely,

Ted Robbins
General Manager, Integrated Water Services



Frequently Asked Questions

What are disinfection by-products (DBP)?

DBP is a group of chemical compounds that are made when chlorine reacts with organic compounds typically present in surface water due to decomposition of materials such as leaves and plants.

Why is chlorine added to the water?

Chlorine is added to drinking water to kill bacteria and viruses. Chlorination is effective in stopping many waterborne diseases. The immediate risk of illness from drinking untreated water is far greater than the health risks of DBP. Currently the Skana Water System is being appropriately operated to balance the safety achieved through chlorination with the concerns arising from the DBP.

What are the health effects of trihalomethanes and haloacetic acids?

People who are exposed to high levels of trihalomethanes or haloacetic acids may have a slight increase in the risk of bladder cancer. This may occur after exposure to high levels for a long period of time, at least 20 years. Other factors like smoking are more commonly related to the development of bladder cancer even where levels may be increased. Some literature suggests that trihalomethanes and haloacetic acids may be associated with a small increase in the risk of other health problems; however, such findings are not conclusive.

How can I be exposed to DBP?

People can be exposed to DBP by drinking water with high levels of DBP. DBP can also evaporate from the tap and be breathed in during showering, or can be absorbed through the skin during bathing.

What can I do to reduce my exposure to DBP?

There are several ways you can lower the DBP for drinking water at home:

- Allow tap water to sit (covered or exposed) for 24 hours (refrigerated or at room temperature) before consumption. This will allow the DBP to partially evaporate into the air.
- Use an activated carbon filter, such as a filter pitcher.
- If boiling water is necessary, for cooking or preparing hot drinks, it is recommended that the water is from one of the aforementioned methods (water that has sat for 24 hours or carbon filtration or bottled water), then do so in a well ventilated area.

You can further lower your exposure to DBP while bathing by:

- Ensuring the bathroom is well-ventilated, such as opening a window or turning the fan on.
- Taking short baths instead of a shower.
- Using colder water to bath or shower.

For more information, visit the Health Canada website at www.canada.ca/en/health-canada.html.