

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Lori Mitchell

SUBJECT: See Below

DATE: September 24, 2024

Approved



Date:

9/25/24

INFORMATION

SUBJECT: Routine PFAS Sampling at San José Municipal Water System Groundwater Wells – Notification Level Exceedance

This memorandum updates the City Council on the levels of one substance in the category commonly known as PFAS in San José Municipal Water System groundwater wells based on routine water quality sampling. San José Municipal Water System's water supply meets safety standards. No actions are necessary.

BACKGROUND

PFAS is a large class of chemicals known as perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances. PFAS are human-made substances that do not occur naturally and their presence in the environment is due to human activity. In April 2024, the United States Environmental Protection Agency finalized a rule to designate two PFAS – PFOA and PFOS – as hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, also known as Superfund. That designation does not change the monitoring requirements addressed in this memorandum.

A maximum contaminant level is the maximum concentration of a chemical that is allowed in public drinking water systems. Maximum contamination levels are adopted as regulations and are health-protective drinking water standards to be met by public water systems. There are currently no federal or state maximum contaminant levels for any PFAS chemical. Federal and state agencies have not yet determined an acceptable PFAS concentration for health and safety within drinking water. However, the State of California has determined notification and response levels for some PFAS chemicals.

Notification levels are nonregulatory, health-based advisory levels established by California for chemicals in drinking water that lack maximum contamination levels and require a report to a utility's governing body when exceeded. Response levels are

established levels for a chemical at which additional steps, beyond notification, are recommended to reduce public exposure.

San José Municipal Water System's PFAS monitoring is required by the State Water Resources Control Board General Orders and began in November 2020 for four Evergreen wells and expanded to a well in the North San José/Alviso service area in January 2023. This testing generally occurs quarterly, so the City Council will be updated on a routine basis as necessary.

ANALYSIS

On October 31, 2022, the State Water Resources Control Board established a notification level of 3 ng/L (nanograms per liter) and response levels of 20 ng/L for a specific PFAS chemical called perfluorohexanesulfonic acid, or PFHxS. This chemical has characteristics that help lift and suspend soil or other particles. As a result, this compound has been used in numerous commercial products to offer water and stain-repellent properties and in fire-fighting foams. PFHxS is resistant to degradation and persists in the environment and biological organisms. PFHxS adversely affects the growth and development of fetuses, infants, and young children.

Routine sampling for the third quarter of 2024 occurred during July 2024. On August 29, 2024, staff was notified by the testing laboratory that PFHxS levels of 3.7 ng/L, 4.2, and 5.3 ng/L (above the 3.0 ng/L notification level) were found at Evergreen Well 2, Well 4, and Well 5, respectively. These levels are consistent with previous sample results at these locations.

No other groundwater well sample contained any PFAS chemical result above an established notification level. Staff anticipates that the PFHxS levels at some or all of its wells may continue to exceed the notification level but remain within the acceptable limits and not require action. The source of PFAS in the San José Municipal Water System's groundwater wells is unknown. The State Water Resources Control Board, Valley Water, and local agencies are actively testing and searching for potential sources. Other than notification, this testing result does not require any action.

San José Municipal Water System's Evergreen service area is primarily supplied with treated surface water purchased from Valley Water, supplemented by groundwater. All Evergreen wells continue to supply water, and during the first three quarters of 2024, provided approximately 1% of the total potable water supply to the Evergreen area.

Staff will continue to follow all state regulations and may periodically return to the City Council with further information.

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/s/

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Acting Director, Environmental Services

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