



Public Health Brief

Richard O. Johnson, M.D., MPH

Public Health Officer

Office: 530-694-2235, Ext 249

e-mail: rjohnson@alpinecountyca.gov

Nichole Williamson

HHS Director

Office: 530-694-2235

24/7/365 Emergency Contact Numbers

Dr. Johnson's cell: (760) 914-0496

Dispatch: 530-694-2231, Ext 330



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Pristine Pure Premium Quality Drinking Water is Freely Available to All in Alpine County!!

A recently published article cast some doubts concerning the safety of drinking water available out of the tap for Alpine County residents and visitors. https://californiahealthline.org/multimedia/a-million-californians-dont-have-clean-drinking-water-where-do-they-live/?utm_campaign=CHL%3A%20Daily%20Edition&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=74121781&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9yVQ-1p7UODhxxhJQmrl-7V0dMlqVxKA-c9MIMVpFd8sTiD2PNyPXyD60-0l1s-l-uPoxsn8c5qCDnB7p73DzxWPozMBg&_hsmi=74121781

First, some background to help you to understand the data. There were 1,175 persons counted in the 2010 census in Alpine County. There are several hundred private wells in Alpine County, which are initially permitted by the County, but then managed by the owner. The Environmental Health Program staff of the Alpine County Public Health Department regulates about 40 small public water systems, including the Markleeville Water Company, Woodfords Mutual Water Company, Diamond Valley Elementary School, and numerous campgrounds. There are 2 large water systems which are regulated by the California State Water Resources



Public Health

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Alpine County Health Department, 75-B Diamond Valley Rd., Markleeville, CA 96120

Alpine County Board of Supervisors, Phone: (530) 694-2281

District 1: Donald M. Jardine, District 2: Ron Hames, District 3: Katherine Rakow,

District 4: Terry Woodrow, District 5: David Griffith

Control Board – Kirkwood Meadows Public Utilities District and Lake Alpine Water Company, along with the Grover Hot Springs State Park. The definition of a “large” water system is one with >200 connections.

The greatest risk to the public’s health from drinking water is bacterial contamination, which is controlled by disinfection. The surface water used by the large water systems is disinfected with chlorine. Byproducts of the disinfection process include trihalomethanes (TTHM) and haloacetic acids (HAA5). Managers work to achieve the ideal balance between enough chlorine to provide water free of bacterial contamination, and at the same time keeping levels of byproducts lower than the maximum contaminant level (MCL) as required by the State Water Resources Control Board. The following links provide more detailed information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/safewater/chlorination-byproducts.html>

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/factsheet/ddbp.html>

Now to the statements in the article: “In rural Alpine County on the Nevada border, more than half of its 1,200 residents don’t have safe water, the worst rate in the state” – “more than half of the residents can’t drink the water flowing from their taps. The most common contaminants are nitrates from farming and naturally occurring arsenic”. These conclusions are drawn from a review of state compliance data dating prior to 2018 and refer only to the Lake Alpine Water Company.

The facts:

1. The data source states that the Lake Alpine Water Company serves a population of 625. This includes 125 residents, and 500 transients (skiers, visitors at the Bear Valley Lodge, and condos); thus, the incorrect statement “more than half of residents”. The data source states that Lake Alpine Water Company serves 487 service connections. This includes 294 single family residences, 179 multiple dwelling units (lodge, condos), 12 commercial, and 2 irrigation systems. So, essentially correct, but includes water provided to visitors.
2. The data shows that the Lake Alpine Water Company was out of compliance with levels of total haloacetic acid exceeding the MCL, the latest violation on 12/31/17. However, what it does not show is that corrective action was promptly performed, with compliance obtained in January of 2018. Quarterly testing during the last 18 months has showed continued compliance, and an official Return to Compliance (RTC) status will be achieved in the near future. There have not been any other violations or enforcement actions taken.
4. The Water Board has never issued an order that “residents can’t drink water flowing from their taps” – anywhere in the county.
5. In the last 25 years of records and memories, water systems in Alpine County have not exceeded MCL’s for either nitrates or arsenic – anywhere in the county.

My conclusion – DRINK UP (WATER!), ENJOY THE 4TH AND YOUR SUMMER. BE GLAD YOU LIVE HERE!



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