



Media Release

California Regional Water Quality Control Board Lahontan Region

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Pacific Gas & Electric Ordered to Provide Replacement Water to Affected Residents in Hinkley, CA

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Lake Tahoe-The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) has ordered PG&E to develop a plan and implement actions to provide whole-house replacement water for residents of Hinkley in San Bernardino County, whose individual wells have been affected by the historic release of hexavalent chromium.

“The Water Board has taken this action to ensure that residents have clean water to use in their homes” said Harold Singer, the Water Board Executive Officer. “While the Water Board is requiring PG&E to provide high quality replacement water, we are confident that PG&E can achieve this goal so that residents can use all their household taps by the summer of 2012.”

The precedent-setting order requires that PG&E provide replacement tap water at residences and other sites where it is determined that PG&E has caused or contributed to levels of hexavalent chromium above the recently adopted Public Health Goal (PHG).

Under the Order, PG&E must provide a water source that allows residents the use of their home faucets. That water may come from any of a number of sources, including deeper wells, large on-site tanks, on-site treatment, or a new community water system. The interim and long-term replacement water must meet all water quality standards including the PHG of **.02 parts per billion (ppb)** for hexavalent chromium or the final water quality standard for hexavalent chromium, once that standard is adopted by the California Department of Public Health; or, at a minimum, be of a quality that is comparable to the water quality in the affected well prior to being impacted by PG&E’s discharge.

Although PG&E has been providing bottled drinking water at several locations in Hinkley, including homes, a school and a senior center, the Regional Water Board is taking this action to ensure that residents in the area do not have to rely on bottled water while PG&E cleans up contaminated groundwater in the area. Environmental justice considerations weighed heavily in this action, as the Hinkley community is comprised of many ethnicities and households of varying income levels.

The Water Board is also requiring PG&E to evaluate the hexavalent chromium levels in domestic wells within one mile of the plume to determine if the hexavalent chromium levels in those wells represent background levels of hexavalent chromium or are due to PG&E's discharge.

PG&E discharged hexavalent chromium, an additive used to inhibit corrosion, into unlined ponds at its compressor station in Hinkley in the 1950s and 1960s. The hexavalent chromium subsequently leaked into the groundwater. While PG&E has been actively cleaning up the affected groundwater, recent data has demonstrated an expansion of the area that has been affected by the historic discharge. This expansion has affected and threatens to affect private residential wells. This Order, coupled with the corrective cleanup actions which have also been required by the Regional Water Board, **are significant steps** in addressing the expansion of the chromium groundwater plume.

The schedule for providing whole-house replacement water was based on need for PG&E to perform pilot tests on some replacement options and to gain community acceptance.

The Lahontan Regional Water Board is a State of California office within the State Water Resources Control Board, an agency of the California Environmental Protection Agency.

To read the entire order please go to:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan/water_issues/projects/pge/docs/r6v_2100_0005a1.pdf