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## Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

### Frequently Asked Questions for Hinkley Whole House Replacement Water Supply June 2012

#### **Why did the Water Board amend the order for alternative water supply?**

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) Cleanup and Abatement Order (CAO) R6V-2011-0005A1 (original CAO), required PG&E to perform a detailed analysis of the source of hexavalent chromium in domestic and community wells within the impacted area, and to provide whole house replacement water service to those served by wells determined to be impacted by its historical discharge. PG&E asserted that there is currently no credible method for determining the source of hexavalent chromium in wells with low levels of detection, and offered to provide whole-house replacement water to anyone in the affected area with detectable levels of chromium in their well. PG&E has indicated that in response to this amended CAO, it will ask the State Board to put its petition on the original CAO into abeyance, meaning that the State Board will not consider that petition at this time. The revised CAO can be found at: [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan/water\\_issues/projects/pge/index.shtml#wbo](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan/water_issues/projects/pge/index.shtml#wbo)

#### **How will the revision change things?**

The amended CAO will allow more people in Hinkley to receive whole house replacement water than would have received it under the original Order. For instance, Water Board staff estimates that the original CAO would have included fewer than 100 household in program. Under the amended CAO more than 200 households will be eligible for the program.

#### **What is the “affected area” eligible to receive whole-house water?**

The amended CAO is identical to the original order in terms of the affected area. That is, the “affected area” is any domestic or community well within one mile east, west or north of the chromium plume (based on the most current quarterly monitoring) that tests for either hexavalent or total chromium of greater than 0.06 parts per billion (ppb). The positive detection for chromium in the wells may have occurred at any time during the previous year of sampling.

#### **What options for whole-house water supply is PG&E offering to residents?**

PG&E is offering to provide either a deeper well or a wellhead treatment system to eligible residents. To receive the deeper well option, the property must meet certain criteria related to water availability and water quality of the lower aquifer at that location. The wellhead treatment option treats water pumped from existing wells using an ion exchange and under sink reverse osmosis (RO) system.

#### **What is the cost for residents to accept a whole-house water supply?**

There is no cost to residents. PG&E will pay all costs, including increased utility costs.

### **What is the quality of treated water from the wellhead treatment system?**

Treated water must contain less than 0.06 ppb hexavalent chromium, the lowest laboratory detection level reasonably available (the Public Health Goal is 0.02 ppb), and meet state drinking water standards for all other constituents, including metals, organics, and inorganics in drinking water at sinks. *(Water from faucets used for showering, laundry, dishwashers, etc., is free of hexavalent chromium but may contain salts such as sodium, chloride, sulfate that may affect taste and other uses).*

### **How long will residents get the whole-house water supply?**

If eligible residents choose the deep well option, the well is theirs to keep. If residents choose the wellhead treatment option, PG&E will take care of all maintenance and sampling on the system for at least five years or until the State of California issues a drinking water standard for hexavalent chromium. The Water Board will then determine if wellhead treatment is still necessary. If the concentration of chromium detected in the well water is higher than the drinking water standard, then PG&E could be required to continue providing wellhead treatment. If, however, the concentration in the well water is below the drinking water standard, the water could be deemed safe for consumption and wellhead treatment would no longer be needed. In the latter case, residents would be allowed to keep the system, but PG&E would no longer pay for the operation and maintenance of the system.

### **How long will it be before the State issues a drinking water standard for hexavalent chromium?**

The California Department of Public Health (DPH) has not set a date for issuing a drinking water standard for hexavalent chromium. However, the best estimate is two to three years.

### **What if I don't like either of the whole-house water supply options being offered by PG&E?**

Eligible residents may accept or reject the options being offered by PG&E for addressing chromium in well water. No one will be forced to participate in the program. Another option available to residents may be PG&E's property purchase program, which is scheduled to sunset this year.

### **Who do I contact if I want to participate in a whole-house water supply program or the property purchase program, or to get more information about all of my options?**

Please contact PG&E's Community Center on Hinkley Road in Hinkley at (760) 253-7888 or toll free at (855) 816-9722 or send an email to: [Hinkleyinfo@pge.com](mailto:Hinkleyinfo@pge.com).

### **Where can I go for more information?**

Site-related information, including the amended CAO and recent Water Board actions, can be viewed on the "PG&E Hinkley Chromium Cleanup" page at: [www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan). You may also contact Lisa Dernbach at (530) 542-5424 or [LDernbach@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:LDernbach@waterboards.ca.gov).