



Overseas Drinking Water Fact Sheet

Introduction

This fact sheet provides information on the quality of our drinking water at overseas Navy installations. This fact sheet's sole purpose is to increase consumer knowledge of drinking water quality, sources, susceptibility, treatment, and drinking water supply management. It also increases awareness of consumers to potential health risks, so they may make informed decisions to reduce those risks, including taking steps toward protecting their water supply.

Is the drinking water safe to drink?

We are in compliance with U.S. safe drinking water quality standards. Drinking water at all overseas Navy installations is tested and monitored on a routine basis, as it is in the U.S. Navy drinking water professionals oversee the testing and monitoring to ensure the water is safe for drinking and other uses such as bathing and cooking. Providing safe drinking water for Sailors, their families and employees at Navy installations, overseas and in the U.S., is a long-standing Navy priority. The Navy is committed to safeguarding the health of Navy personnel and their families, and installation employees. In fact, the Navy has begun instituting a number of proactive measures to bolster the management and oversight of its overseas drinking water program.

Navy Water Quality Standards

The Navy's standard for the quality of overseas drinking water at its installations is that the quality will meet or exceed U.S. water quality standards. The drinking water that comes out of your tap on the installation has to meet all health based U.S. standards. Since the installation is overseas, U.S. law does not apply, but DoD and Navy policy requires the installation drinking water meet or exceed U.S. (National Primary Drinking Water Requirements) and DoD requirements (Environmental Final Governing Standards). At the few Navy installations where the water systems are not adequate, Navy personnel are issued bottled or trucked drinking water.

Consumer Water Quality Information

The Navy issues annual Consumer Confidence reports to Navy personnel and their families concerning the quality of their drinking water. These reports are widely distributed. Additionally, all new Navy personnel are provided an overview of the quality of drinking water at the installation's and the local community upon arrival.

How often do you test the water?

The drinking water on overseas installations is tested several times daily for certain aspects, such as temperature, pH, alkalinity, chlorine content, and hardness. In accordance with environmental monitoring requirements, a range of over 100 contaminants is tested for on a quarterly basis, and additional contaminants of concern are checked for on a less frequent basis.

Audits and Surveys

In addition to periodic CNIC and NAVFAC audits, water sanitary surveys are administered triennially to evaluate the production and distribution of safe drinking water.

Drinking Water Policies

CNIC has recently published a set of instructions that:

- Sets the requirements for drinking water at overseas installations (CNICINST 5090.1);
- Establishes criteria for overseas drinking water operations and operator certification/training that are similar to U.S operations (CNICINST 5090.2); and
- Formalizes a multi-tiered oversight and management framework that functions similarly to U.S. EPA and state environmental oversight bodies (CNICINST 5090.3)

Many of the newly formalized criteria and requirements were adopted from recommendations made by the Navy IG in 2009. While the Navy has had a comprehensive overseas drinking water program in place for many years, these new instructions will strengthen its existing program.

Water Systems Management

Drinking water overseas is managed by Navy professionals, including engineers, scientists, and medical doctors. Some drinking water systems are managed by contractors who must meet qualification requirements like those in the U.S. Drinking water plant operators are being required to meet new, more stringent requirements that included additional training and certification, to ensure they are as qualified as operators in the U.S.

If I live overseas, do I need to take special precautions?

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immuno-compromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have

undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants can be particularly at risk from contaminants. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. EPA/Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by Cryptosporidium and other microbial contaminants are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline (1-800-426-4791).

Why are there contaminants in my drinking water?

Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and, in some cases, radioactive material, and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activity. Microbial contaminants, such as viruses and bacteria, may come from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, and wildlife. Inorganic contaminants, such as salts and metals, can be naturally-occurring or result from urban storm water runoff, industrial or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming. Pesticides and herbicides may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban storm water runoff, and residential uses. Organic chemical contaminants, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals, are by-products of industrial processes and petroleum production, and can also come from gas stations, urban storm water runoff, and septic systems. Radioactive contaminants can be naturally occurring or be the result of oil and gas production and mining activities. In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, EPA prescribes regulations that limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations establish limits for contaminants in bottled water, which must provide the same protection for public health. At each host nation, the host nation government, and the US Forces also regulate the quality of drinking water.

Installation Water System

Each overseas Navy installation is operated and maintained by the installation Public Works Department. The water is pumped from water treatment plants. The water supply to these treatment plants is a combination of surface rivers and reservoirs, a desalination plant and ground water wells.

Monitoring of Your Drinking Water

We use only approved laboratory methods to analyze your drinking water. Our trained personnel take water samples from the distribution system and residents' taps. Samples are then shipped to an accredited laboratory where a full spectrum of water quality analyses is performed.

Additional Resources

For more information on water quality at overseas Navy installations, visit CNIC's web site at http://cnic.navy.mil/om/base_support/environmental/water_quality.html