

# Torrington drinking water deemed safe

BY: Kevin Bottrell, The Torrington Telegram

According to the recently released 2007 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report, the amount of potentially harmful substances in Torrington's drinking water falls below the Environmental Protection Agency's maximum allowable levels.

The report tested the Torrington drinking water for different contaminants including uranium, alpha emitters, arsenic, barium, copper, fluoride, lead, nitrogen and haloacetic acids. This year's report also includes water from the new treatment plant, which began sending out water Feb. 23, 2007.

The tests reported either none or lower than maximum allowable levels of each contaminant, meeting or exceeding all of the state and federal requirements for clean drinking water.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets the maximum contaminant levels for each possible contaminant in the water. These contaminants can be harmful to humans if consumed in high doses. According to Tom Troxel, Torrington water department supervisor, the EPA sets the maximum contaminant levels very stringently, well below the minimum levels that studies show are harmful.

More than 10 parts per million (ppm) of nitrogen in drinking water, for instance, can be a health risk to infants younger than six months old. Average levels of nitrogen recorded in Torrington's drinking water range from 4.8 to 7.7 ppm.

The EPA sets an annual list of different contaminants for community water departments to monitor. Troxel said that because of the time consuming and expensive nature of water testing, the department takes several years to complete all of the tests needed for the report.

However, Troxel noted that the results are unlikely to drastically change between the completion of each test and the compiling of the report, barring a one-time accident such as a chemical spill.

The water samples tested for contaminants for the drinking water report were taken from sample ports at the treatment plant after the water had been treated. The samples are sent to Energy Laboratories in Casper for testing. Each contaminant test has different procedures; some require special additives and some have to be done more quickly than others. The EPA sets strict standards, Troxel said, and if not followed, the test results are invalid.

Torrington has been required to compile and publish drinking water quality reports since 1998. According to Troxel, there were some contaminant level violations in 1998, but there have been no violations since the first reverse osmosis (RO) units were installed in 1999.

"These reports are a centerpiece of public right to know with regards to amendments to the 1974 Safe Drinking Water Act," Troxel said.

The reports can also help consumers get more involved in the decisions that affect their water.

"Information contained in the records can raise consumers' awareness of where their drinking water comes from, help them understand the process by which safe drinking water is delivered to their homes and educate them about the importance of preventative measures such as source water protection that ensure a safe drinking water supply," Troxel said.

Troxel is required by law to publish the report in two different local newspapers before July 1 each year. The full report appeared in the May 2 issue of the Torrington Telegram and has also appeared in the Scottsbluff Star-Herald. It is also available on the city Web site, [www.city-of-torrington.org](http://www.city-of-torrington.org).

The tests are ongoing, and the Water Department is currently conducting sampling for lead and copper in the drinking water. This is the only sampling not directly conducted by the water department; rather, it relies on about 40 consumers collecting samples of their drinking water. The tests will measure the amount of lead and copper that has been stripped off pipes and absorbed into the water. The results will appear on next year's report.

In addition to the drinking water quality report, the Torrington Water Department has been awarded a certificate from the EPA for perfect compliance in its bacteriological samples. Seven samples are taken once a month to test for total coliform and fecal coliform bacteria, all of which have been negative. This is the eighth year that Torrington has been awarded this certificate.

“There’s not very many small water systems out there that can say they have perfect bacteria samples,” Troxel said.

Torrington water also placed in the top three drinking water supplies in the state for best tasting water.

“We’ve placed in the past,” Troxel said. “Placing again is a great reward for the city of Torrington and for all of the water operators.”