

Arsenic levels exceed standards at YPG; officials say it poses no problem

[BY DARIN FENGER, SUN STAFF WRITER](#)

January 16, 2008 - 10:52AM

Arsenic levels have exceeded standards in three out of five water wells used by Yuma Proving Ground, but officials say the problem is a familiar one that's under control and presents no danger.

"YPG has known about amounts of arsenic being in the groundwater for years and years," said Chuck Wullenjohn, YPG spokesman.

Wullenjohn stressed that the Environmental Protection Agency and state of Arizona recently raised their standards for arsenic, making the levels at YPG seemingly register a bit higher.

"The new standards make it very difficult for us to meet requirements, especially using systems installed in the past."

Arsenic naturally appears in the earth's crust and gets into water supplies when different minerals and ores are dissolved, according to a YPG press statement. Arsenic is found in both the bedrock and soil in Yuma County.

"If you look around the state, you'll see a very large number of places exceeding standards around the state," Wullenjohn said. "This is not an isolated thing."

Employees at YPG have traditionally avoided drinking water from the tap, drinking bottled water instead. The base's housing areas, however, have been equipped with the reverse osmosis systems needed to remove arsenic.

Wullenjohn said that using the non-treated water for uses other than drinking poses no danger, including when people use such water for washing their hands.

YPG plans to make a proposal to the Army that YPG be fitted with a complete water treatment system, one that would resolve the arsenic issue. Wullenjohn said such a project would amount to major, lengthy construction. He declined to predict when such a system, once approved, could be built.

Darin Fenger can be reached at dfenger@yumasun.com or 538-6860.