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## Well tests high for uranium, but officials say water is safe

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The Desert Water Agency took a well offline and notified 2,300 customers after a Palm Springs well's uranium levels tested high.

But officials say there's no significant health risk.

The average uranium level at the well, located at La Verne Way and Caliente Drive, registered at 21.5 picocuries per liter (pci/L). The standard is 20 pci/L.

Officials with the Desert Water Agency attribute the higher-than-acceptable rating to natural fluctuations in the rock. And they stress that there is no immediate risk or need to drink bottled water.

"The water is safe," General Manager Dave Luker said several times during a phone interview with The Desert Sun Tuesday.

Drinking high levels of uranium over many years is known to increase the risk of cancer and kidney toxicity.

But Luker stresses that this well is about 40 years old and has never tested high for uranium before.

Agency officials stopped using the well after getting the test results this year, Luker said. The tests were conducted March through December of last year.

The agency is doing more tests to determine what treatment options are available, Luker said.

The 20 pci/L standard is based on long-term health effects of drinking two liters daily for 70 years, according to Jing Chao, associate engineer with the California Department of Health Services.

The standard is equivalent to the Federal Environmental Protection Agency's uranium standard of 30 micrograms per liter, which Chao described as equaling 30 cents out of \$10 million.

The well in question is one of about 30 the Desert Water Agency utilizes. It's a source of water for 8.3 percent of their customers.

The notice was published in the Desert Sun, and letters went out to customers. But no one has called the agency with concerns.

Experts say these uranium results should not be cause for alarm.

"There's a large safety factor built into the standards," said Bob Krieger, a toxicologist at the University of California Riverside. "Such a small difference is not going to be of health significance. ... It's not going to represent a risk to health. There's certainly no reason to not drink the water."

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