

# OUR WATER OUR FUTURE

## CITY OF PALO ALTO 2025 WATER QUALITY REPORT



This document provides important information on the City of Palo Alto's water quality for calendar year 2025. Palo Alto's water meets all federal and state drinking water standards. Find more details inside.

Este informe contiene información importante sobre su agua potable.  
Visite [paloalto.gov/waterresources](https://paloalto.gov/waterresources) para obtener una copia en español.

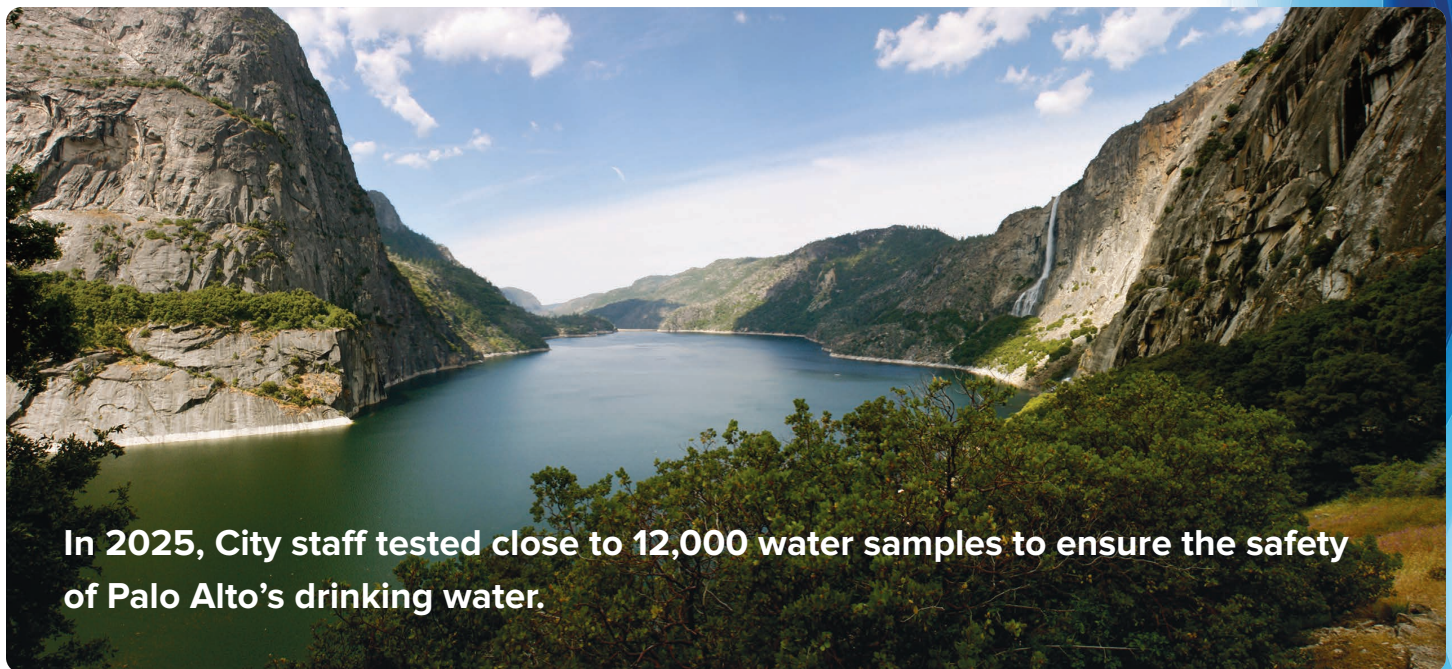
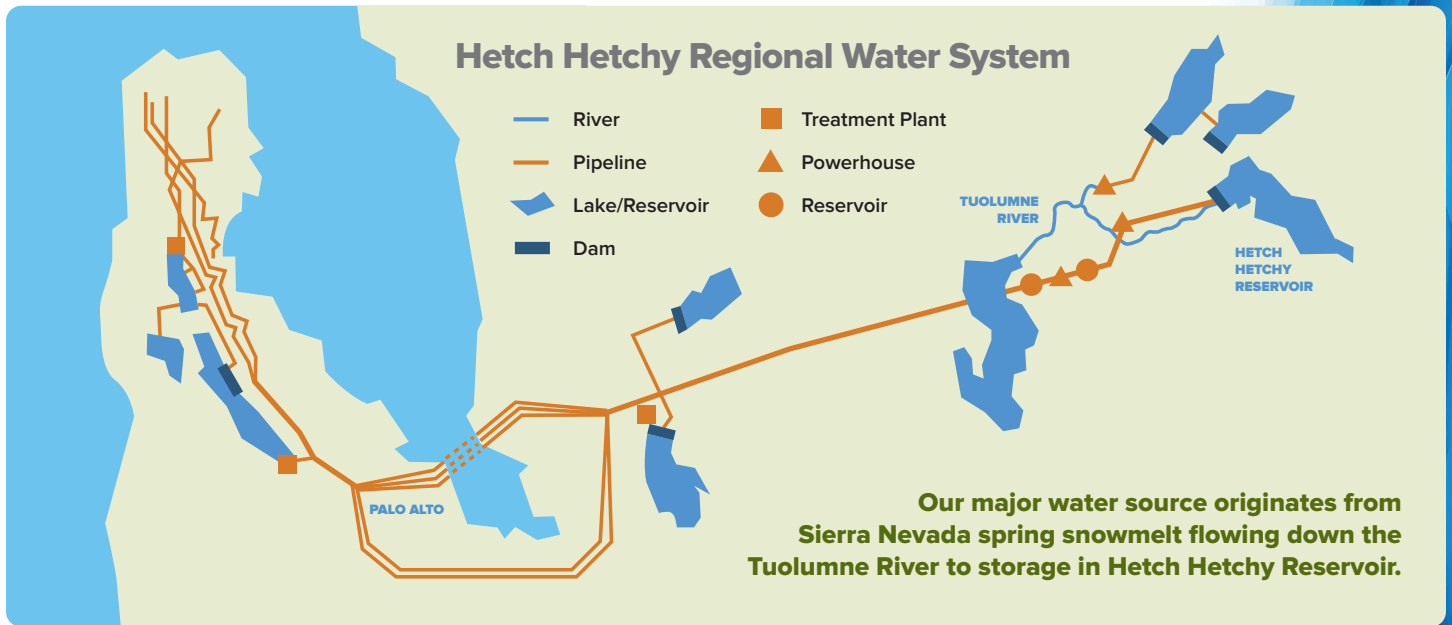
該報告包含有關您的飲用水的重要資訊。  
請造訪 [paloalto.gov/waterresources](https://paloalto.gov/waterresources) 以取得該報告的翻譯版本。




CITY OF  
**PALO ALTO**  
UTILITIES

## DRINKING WATER SOURCES AND TREATMENT

The San Francisco Regional Water System (SFRWS) drinking water supply consists of surface water and groundwater that are well protected and carefully managed. The surface water is stored in reservoirs in the Sierra Nevada, Alameda County, and San Mateo County. The groundwater source is a deep aquifer in northern San Mateo County. Maintaining these sources is an important component of our near- and long-term water supply management. A diversity of sources not only protects us from potential disruptions due to emergencies or natural disasters, but also provides resiliency during periods of drought. It helps us ensure a sustainable water supply as we address issues such as climate uncertainty, regulatory changes, and population growth.





All surface water we deliver to you undergoes proper treatment approved by regulatory agencies. Water from Hetch Hetchy Reservoir is exempt from state and federal filtration requirements due to its exceptional quality. However, it is still subject to disinfection using ultraviolet light and chlorine, pH adjustment for optimum corrosion control, fluoridation for dental health protection, and chloramination for maintaining disinfectant residual and minimizing the formation of regulated disinfection byproducts. Raw water from local reservoirs in Alameda County and upcountry non-Hetch Hetchy sources are delivered to the Sunol Valley Water Treatment Plant (SVWTP). Similarly, water from reservoirs in San Mateo County is delivered to the Harry Tracy Water Treatment Plant. Water treatment at these plants consists of filtration, disinfection, fluoridation, taste and odor removal, and optimum corrosion control.

In 2025, neither the SFRWS upcountry non-Hetch Hetchy sources nor its groundwater wells were used; however, the SFRWS imported a very small amount (0.38%) of treated water from Santa Clara Valley Water District in April and May.

### **PROTECTION OF WATERSHEDS**

The SFRWS conducts watershed sanitary surveys for its Hetch Hetchy source annually and the non-Hetch Hetchy surface water sources every five years. The latest sanitary surveys for the non-Hetch Hetchy watersheds were completed in 2021. These surveys summarize the following:

- Sanitary conditions of the watersheds
- Water quality of the reservoirs in the watersheds
- The SFRWS stringent watershed protection activities are implemented with support from its partner agencies including the National Park Service and the United States Forest Service
- Results of watershed management activities conducted in prior years

Overall, wildfire, wildlife, livestock, and human activities continue to be potential contamination sources. You may contact the San Francisco District Office of the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) Division of Drinking Water at **(510) 620-3474** for more information.

### **CONTAMINANTS AND DRINKING WATER**

The sources of drinking water (both tap water and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. 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.

Contaminants that may be present in source water include:

- Microbial contaminants, such as viruses and bacteria, that may come from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, and wildlife.
- Inorganic contaminants, such as salts and metals, that can be naturally-occurring or result from urban stormwater runoff, industrial or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming.
- Pesticides and herbicides, that may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban stormwater runoff, and residential uses.
- Organic chemical contaminants, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals, that are byproducts of industrial processes and petroleum production, and can also come from gas stations, urban stormwater runoff, agricultural application, and septic systems.
- Radioactive contaminants, that can be naturally-occurring or be the result of oil and gas production and mining activities.

Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk.

More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) Safe Drinking Water Hotline at **(800) 426-4791**, or at [epa.gov/safewater](https://epa.gov/safewater).

## **WATER QUALITY**

The SFRWS regularly tests water from reservoirs and designated sampling locations throughout the system. In 2025, the SFRWS performed more than 45,550 drinking water tests. This is in addition to the extensive treatment process monitoring conducted by certified operators and online instruments.

The City of Palo Alto tests the water quality of the local water distribution system and in 2025 collected and tested close to 12,000 water samples.

In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, the U.S. EPA and the SWRCB prescribe regulations that limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. The United States Food and Drug Administration regulations and California law also establish limits for contaminants in bottled water that provide the same protection for public health.

## **NOTICE FROM THE SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION (SFPUC)**


**This notice is being provided directly by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) and not by the City of Palo Alto.** The information below pertains to the SFRWS, operated by the SFPUC. During the time period referenced in this notice, the water delivered to our Palo Alto customers met all federal and state drinking water standards. The SFPUC is required to notify its customers of a monitoring violation within one year after it learns of the violation. This notice is to inform you that the SFRWS, which is operated by the SFPUC, failed to monitor for recycled filter backwash water turbidity (very small or microscopic particles in the water) at its SVWTP from June 23, 2025, to July 2, 2025. This monitoring violation was the result of equipment failure and was corrected on July 3, 2025, as soon as it became apparent to plant staff. Even though this failure was not an emergency and did not impact water quality, as our customers, we want you to know what happened and what we did to correct this situation.

Treated or “backwash” water is used to wash the filters at the treatment plant after they have completed a run cycle. Instead of wasting this backwash water, the SVWTP treats it and then recycles it to the front of the plant where it blends with the source or lake water and then goes through the whole treatment process again. Monitoring at downstream locations at the SVWTP indicated that the plant’s effluent or final product was consistently of very high quality and exceeded all drinking water standards.

The instrument (turbidimeter) that monitors turbidity for the recycled water was not operating during the period mentioned above. The instrument was subsequently repaired and put back into operation on July 3, 2025, and since that time the daily monitoring of recycled filter backwash water turbidity has resumed with no interruption. Operations staff was retrained on monitoring requirements and additional operational and maintenance activities were implemented to prevent a recurrence. If you need more information, please contact SFPUC at **(415) 551-3000** or where as listed on the last page of this report.

## **FLUORIDATION AND DENTAL FLUOROSIS**

Mandated by state law, water fluoridation is a widely accepted practice proven safe and effective for preventing and controlling tooth decay. The SWRCB recommends that fluoridating systems maintain an optimal fluoride level of 0.7 milligrams per liter (mg/L, or part per million, ppm). This optimal level, recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2015, provides the benefits of



tooth decay prevention while minimizing the chance that children develop dental fluorosis. Infants fed formula mixed with water containing fluoride at this level may still have a chance of developing mild to very mild fluorosis, which can cause tiny white lines or streaks in their teeth. These marks are often only visible under a microscope. Even in cases where the marks are visible, they do not pose any health risk. To lessen the chance of dental fluorosis, you may choose to use low-fluoride bottled water to prepare infant formula. Nevertheless, children may still develop dental fluorosis due to fluoride intake from other sources such as food, toothpaste, and dental products. Contact your healthcare provider or the SWRCB if you have concerns about dental fluorosis. For additional information about fluoridation or oral health, visit the SWRCB website [waterboards.ca.gov/drinking\\_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Fluoridation.html](https://waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Fluoridation.html), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website [cdc.gov/fluoridation](https://cdc.gov/fluoridation), or [sfpuc.gov/TapWater](https://sfpuc.gov/TapWater).

### **SPECIAL HEALTH NEEDS**

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immunocompromised persons, such as those with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants can be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their healthcare providers.

The SFRWS regularly tests for *Cryptosporidium*, a waterborne parasitic microbe that may be spread through means other than drinking water. As in the past, this pathogen was found at very low levels in source water and treated water in 2025. Current test methods approved by the U.S. EPA do not distinguish between dead organisms and those capable of causing disease. *Cryptosporidium* must be ingested to cause cryptosporidiosis with symptoms of nausea, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, and associated headaches.

U.S. EPA/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 **(800) 426-4791** or at [epa.gov/safewater](https://epa.gov/safewater).

### **DRINKING WATER AND LEAD**

The City of Palo Alto has completed the initial Lead Service Line Inventory to comply with the U.S. EPA's 2021 Lead and Copper Rule Revisions, which confirms that no lead service lines are present in the distribution system. The inventory is publicly available and can be accessed using the interactive map at [gis.cityofpaloalto.org/LCRR/index.html](https://gis.cityofpaloalto.org/LCRR/index.html) to search by address.

Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. The City of Palo Alto is responsible for providing high quality drinking water and removing lead pipes but cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components in your home. You share the responsibility for protecting yourself and your family from the lead in your home plumbing. You can take responsibility by identifying and removing lead materials within your home plumbing and taking steps to reduce your family's risk. Before drinking tap water, flush your pipes for several minutes by running your tap, taking a shower, doing laundry or a load of dishes. You can also use a filter certified by an American National Standards Institute accredited certifier to reduce lead in drinking water. If you are concerned about lead in your water and wish to have your water tested, contact the City of Palo Alto at **(650) 496-6967**. The City does not offer lead sampling for individual homeowners, however we can provide information on how to obtain a drinking water lead sampling kit from a state certified laboratory. Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure is available at [epa.gov/safewater/lead](https://epa.gov/safewater/lead).

# Your Water Quality Data for 2025 <sup>(1)</sup>

This report is a snapshot of last year’s water quality. Unless indicated otherwise, the tables below list contaminants detected in our drinking water monitored in 2025. Information about their typical sources is also included.

The SFRWS holds monitoring waivers approved by the SWRBC for some contaminants in the surface water; therefore, they are monitored less than once a year.

DETECTED CONTAMINANTS	Unit	MCL/TT	PHG or (MCLG)	Range or Level Found	Average or [Max]	Typical Sources in Drinking Water
<b>TURBIDITY</b>						
Unfiltered Hetch Hetchy Water	NTU	5	N/A	0.3 - 0.5 <sup>(2)</sup>	[3.4]	Soil runoff
Filtered Water from Sunol Valley Water Treatment Plant (SVWTP)	NTU	TT = Max 1	N/A	-	[0.3]	Soil runoff
	-	TT = Min 95% of samples ≤ 0.3 NTU	N/A	100%	-	Soil runoff
Filtered Water from Harry Tracy Water Treatment Plant (HTWTP)	NTU	TT = Max 1	N/A	-	[0.1]	Soil runoff
	-	TT = Min 95% of samples ≤ 0.3 NTU	N/A	100%	-	Soil runoff
<b>DISINFECTION BYPRODUCTS AND PRECURSOR</b>						
Total Trihalomethanes	ppb	80	N/A	13.0 - 44.0	[35.8] <sup>(3)</sup>	Byproduct of drinking water disinfection
Five Haloacetic Acids	ppb	60	N/A	9.8 - 71.6	[44.0] <sup>(3)</sup>	Byproduct of drinking water disinfection
Bromate	ppb	10	0.1	1.9 - 4.1	[3.5] <sup>(4)</sup>	Byproduct of drinking water disinfection using ozone
<b>MICROBIOLOGICAL</b>						
<i>E. coli</i>	-	0 PS	(0)	-	[0]	Human or animal fecal waste
<b>INORGANICS</b>						
Chromium (VI)	ppb	10	0.02	ND - 0.1	0.1	Erosion of natural deposits
Fluoride <sup>(5)</sup> (raw water)	ppm	2.0	1	ND - 0.9	0.3	Erosion of natural deposits; water additive to promote strong teeth
Nitrate (as N)	ppm	10	10	ND - 0.4	ND	Erosion of natural deposits
Chlorine (including free chlorine and chloramine)	ppm	MRDL = 4.0	MRDLG = 4	0.44 - 3.41	[2.78] <sup>(4)</sup>	Drinking water disinfectant added for treatment

NON-REGULATED WATER QUALITY PARAMETERS	Unit	ORL	Range	Average
Alkalinity (as CaCO <sub>3</sub> )	ppm	N/A	8 - 131	64
Bromide	ppb	N/A	21 - 28	24
Boron	ppb	1000 (NL)	21 - 71	43
Calcium (as Ca)	ppm	N/A	3.1 - 29	16
Chlorate <sup>(6)</sup>	ppb	800 (NL)	<20 - 281	88
<i>Giardia lamblia</i>	cyst/L	N/A	0 - 0.05	0.01
Hardness (as CaCO <sub>3</sub> )	ppm	N/A	8.1 - 112	62
Magnesium	ppm	N/A	0.2 - 10	5.9
pH	-	N/A	8.6 - 9.7	9.3
Silica	ppm	N/A	5.3 - 7.8	6.2
Sodium	ppm	N/A	3.1 - 29	18
Total Organic Carbon <sup>(9)</sup>	ppm	N/A	1.4 - 3.1	2.1

## KEY

- < / ≤ = less than / less than or equal to
- cyst/L = cyst per Liter
- Max = Maximum
- Min = Minimum
- N/A = Not Available
- ND = Non-Detect
- NL = Notification Level
- NTU = Nephelometric Turbidity Unit
- ORL = Other Regulatory Level
- ppb = part per billion
- ppm = part per million
- PS = Number of Positive Sample
- RAL = Regulatory Action Level
- µS/cm = microSiemens/centimeter

The state allows us to monitor for some contaminants less than once per year because the concentrations of these contaminants do not change frequently. Some of our representative data is more than a year old.

CONSTITUENTS WITH SECONDARY STANDARDS	Unit	SMCL	PHG	Range	Average	Typical Sources in Drinking Water
Chloride	ppm	500	N/A	<3 - 19	9.8	Runoff / leaching from natural deposits
Iron	ppb	300	N/A	<6 - 36	12	Leaching from natural deposits
Manganese	ppb	50	N/A	<2 - 2.7	<2	Leaching from natural deposits
Specific Conductance	µS/cm	1600	N/A	32 - 346	207	Substances that form ions when in water
Sulfate	ppm	500	N/A	1 - 45	21	Runoff / leaching from natural deposits
Total Dissolved Solids	ppm	1000	N/A	24 - 197	117	Runoff / leaching from natural deposits
Turbidity	NTU	5	N/A	<0.1 - 0.3	0.1	Soil runoff

LEAD AND COPPER	Unit	RAL	PHG	Range	90th Percentile	Typical Sources in Drinking Water
Copper	ppb	1300	300	14.3 - 114 <sup>(6)</sup>	61.9	Internal corrosion of household water plumbing systems
Lead	ppb	15	0.2	0.2 - 9.74 <sup>(7)</sup>	0	Internal corrosion of household water plumbing systems

## KEY WATER-QUALITY TERMS

The following are definitions of key terms referring to standards and goals of water quality noted on the data table.

**Public Health Goal (PHG):** The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. PHGs are set by the California Environmental Protection Agency.

**Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG):** The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLGs are set by the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

**Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL):** The highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. Primary MCLs are set as close to the PHGs or MCLGs as is economically and technologically feasible. Secondary MCLs (SMCLs) are set to protect the odor, taste, and appearance of drinking water.

**Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level Goal (MRDLG):** The level of a drinking water disinfectant below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MRDLGs do not reflect the benefits of the use of disinfectants to control microbial contaminants.

**Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level (MRDL):** The highest level of a disinfectant allowed in drinking water. There is convincing evidence that the addition of a disinfectant is necessary for control of microbial contaminants.

**Treatment Technique (TT):** A required process intended to reduce the level of a contaminant in drinking water.

**Primary Drinking Water Standard (PDWS):** MCLs, MRDLs, and TT for contaminants that affect health, along with their monitoring and reporting requirements.

**Regulatory Action Level:** The concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements that a water system must follow.

**Turbidity:** A water clarity indicator that measures the cloudiness of the water and is also used to indicate the effectiveness of a filtration system.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>(1)</sup> All results met state and federal drinking water health standards.

<sup>(2)</sup> These are monthly average turbidity values measured every 4 hours daily at Tesla Treatment Facilities.

<sup>(3)</sup> This is the highest locational running annual average value.

<sup>(4)</sup> This is the highest running annual average value.

<sup>(5)</sup> Natural fluoride in Hetch Hetchy water was ND. Elevated fluoride levels in raw water at both SVWTP and HTWTP were attributed to transfers of fluoridated Hetch Hetchy water into the local reservoirs. The fluoride level in SFRWS's treated water ranged from 0.5 ppm to 0.8 ppm with an average of 0.7 ppm.

<sup>(6)</sup> CPAU meets the standards required to be on a reduced triennial monitoring schedule for lead and copper. The most recent Lead and Copper Rule monitoring was in 2023. Out of 38 site samples collected at consumer taps, 0 had Copper concentrations above regulatory action level.

<sup>(7)</sup> CPAU meets the standards required to be on a reduced triennial monitoring schedule for lead and copper. The most recent Lead and Copper Rule monitoring was in 2023. Out of 38 site samples collected at consumer taps, 0 had Lead concentrations above the regulatory action level.

<sup>(8)</sup> The detected chlorate in the treated water is a degradation product of sodium hypochlorite used by the SFRWS for water disinfection.

<sup>(9)</sup> The range and average values of the total organic carbon were from operational monitoring results at Alameda East, SVWTP effluent, and HTWTP effluent.

**Note:** Additional water quality data may be obtained by calling the City of Palo Alto phone number at **(650) 496-6967**.

# Get Involved

We welcome your input on important water issues. Information about public meetings can be found online at the websites below:

## **City Council Meetings**

[paloalto.gov/CouncilAgendas](http://paloalto.gov/CouncilAgendas)

City Council Meetings are held on the first three Mondays of the month at 5:30 p.m.

## **Utilities Advisory Commission (UAC) Meetings**

[paloalto.gov/UAC](http://paloalto.gov/UAC)

Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of every month at 6 p.m.

# For More Information

## **WATER QUALITY**

### **City of Palo Alto Utilities, Water Transmission, Jason Weir**

(650) 496-6967

[paloalto.gov/waterresources](http://paloalto.gov/waterresources)

### **San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC)**

(415) 551-3000

[sfwater.org](http://sfwater.org)

### **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA)**

#### **Drinking Water**

(415) 947-8000

[epa.gov](http://epa.gov)

### **Office of Emergency Services Warning Center**

(800) 852-7550 or (916) 845-8911

When reporting a water quality emergency to the Warning Center, please ask for the State Water Resources Control Board Division of Drinking Water Duty Officer.

## **HEALTH CONCERNS & REGULATIONS**

### **State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)**

(916) 341-5300

[swrcb.ca.gov](http://swrcb.ca.gov)

### **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA)**

#### **Safe Drinking Water Hotline**

(800) 426-4791

[epa.gov/safewater](http://epa.gov/safewater)

## **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

### **California Department of Public Health**

(916) 558-1784

[bepreparedcalifornia.ca.gov](http://bepreparedcalifornia.ca.gov)

### **City of Palo Alto Office of Emergency Services**

(650) 617-3197

[paloalto.gov/preparedness](http://paloalto.gov/preparedness)



CITY OF  
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UTILITIES

250 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94301

(650) 329-2161

[paloalto.gov/utilities](http://paloalto.gov/utilities)