NITRATE NOTICE

SUBJECT: NITRATE CONTAMINATION IN YOUR WATER SUPPLY

Sampling of your water well has confirmed the presence of nitrate at a concentration that exceeds the State of California, Department of Public Health (CDPH) maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 10 mg/L (as N) or 10 parts per million (ppm).

CDPH sets drinking water standards and has determined that nitrate poses an acute health concern at certain levels of exposure. Nitrate is used in fertilizer and is found in sewage and wastes from human and/or farm animals and generally gets into drinking water from those activities. Excessive levels of nitrate in drinking water have caused serious illness and sometimes death in infants under six months of age. The serious illness in infants is caused because nitrate is converted to nitrite in the body. Nitrite interferes with the oxygen carrying capacity of the child's blood. This condition is known as methemoglobinemia. This is an acute disease in that symptoms can develop rapidly in infants. In most cases, health deteriorates over a period of days. Symptoms include shortness of breath and blueness of the skin. Clearly, expert medical advice should be sought immediately if these symptoms occur.

Pregnant women are also at risk of developing these symptoms due to the presence of nitrate in their drinking water. During pregnancy, it is common for methemoglobin levels to increase from the normal range (0.5 to 2.5% of the total hemoglobin) to a maximum of 10% in the 30th week of pregnancy, and then decline to normal levels after delivery. Therefore, pregnant women are particularly susceptible to methemoglobinemia and should be sure that their drinking water does not exceed safe levels of nitrate. There is, however, no clear evidence that nitrate can be transmitted to the fetus from the pregnant woman.

Non-pregnant adults and children over six months of age need not be concerned, as they are not known to be affected at levels in excess of 10 ppm.

Commercially bottled water is recommended for feeding of infants and for consumption by pregnant women as a precautionary measure. Conventional filtering or boiling will not remove this contaminant. Boiling will, in fact, increase the nitrate and the hazard.

DO NOT BOIL: BOILING WILL NOT CORRECT THE HAZARD OF NITRATE

For more information, please contact your family physician or the Fresno County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division at (559) 600-3357.