

# Safe Drinking Water Alert

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The October 28, 2022 notice is not a violation for unsafe drinking water and at no time, now or then, is anyone at risk.

On Friday October 28, 2022 you received notice from the Water and Sewer Department of The City of Cape May. This letter of noncompliance was required and written by N.J. Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), for exceeding a newly established range for pH levels 4 times during the first five months the new level was in place. The notification format was handed down by the Bureau of Safe Drinking Water. Despite our attempts to make the letter more informative and direct on what occurred, The Bureau was uncompromising in the language. Questions about why this format had to be used should be directed to Erin Schumacher, [Erin.Schumacher@dep.nj.gov](mailto:Erin.Schumacher@dep.nj.gov) and/or Chelsea Fernandez at [Chelsea.Fernandez@dep.nj.gov](mailto:Chelsea.Fernandez@dep.nj.gov). They would not let the notification be edited, and we could not add any additional details or an explanation for what occurred.

On November 8, 2020, the NJDEP sent notification via email to the City, which changed the acceptable range for the pH of water entering the system. The range was changed from 6.8-8.8 to 7.0-8.0. This new narrower range is generally within our normal operational range. Notification of this new change was sent to the former City Manager. Such an important change warrants notification by letter to ensure receipt. On January 1, 2021, these changes

went into effect without our knowledge, or the knowledge of Garden State Labs, who conduct these tests for us. We did these bi-weekly tests thinking that we were in full compliance with NJDEP.

Nonetheless, Cape May operated mostly within The NJDEP newly issued optimal water quality parameter range of 7.0-8.0 . Four tests were outside of the new range but within the previous pH range of 6.8 to 8.8, resulting in the mandated notification. Please note that high priced bottled water companies are selling water with a pH of 9.5.

On 10/18/2021 a letter of noncompliance from the NJDEP was received by the Water and Sewer Dept. We immediately made the necessary changes in the water treatment plant to keep the pH between 7 and 8, and since implementing these changes all test results are within the new range. We do not believe the 4 test results, that were outside the new optimal range, had a negative effect on water quality.

We have been working to resubmit the proper forms to bring us back into compliance and have argued that the noncompliance should be rescinded since the pH range changes were never delivered to the proper authorities of Cape May City. NJDEP is unwilling to listen to reason or to admit that they failed to properly notify us of the changes they implemented and forced us to send out the notice which was delivered last week.

Cape May's distribution system does not contain any lead and has never had a lead or copper action level exceedance.

Our historical lead sampling results have been well below the 90th percentile action level of 15 part per billion (ppb). We sampled 140 residences since 2019. We are sampling 40 residences in the second half of this year to confirm that the water delivered by the City of Cape May is not causing excessive lead in the drinking water of our residents.