

Update on the Bamfield Drinking Water Quality Advisory

December 20, 2013

On November 20, 2013, Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District issued an advisory that the Bamfield water system had trihalomethane (THM) levels that exceeded the limit set in the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality. THMs are a group of chemical compounds that are made when chlorine reacts with organic matter in water, such as wood and leaves. The level of THMs in drinking water depends on the amount of organic material in the water source.

The purpose of this letter is to advise you that the Bamfield water system has now been found to have haloacetic acids (HAAs) levels that exceed the limit set in the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality.

Since the November advisory, additional testing of the Bamfield water system has identified increased levels of HAAs which are often found associated with THMs. The increased levels of HAAs found are not unexpected. Like THMs, HAAs are a group of compounds that are formed when chlorine reacts with organic matter.

There is no immediate risk to health. Health effects from HAAs have not been well established but appear to be associated with consumption of high levels of HAAs for many years or decades. The current recommendations provided with the November 20th letter are unchanged by this new information. These recommendations include drinking water that has been stored for 24 hours or boiled and cooled, filtering water with activated carbon before drinking, or by using bottled water to reduce exposures to THMs and HAAs.

The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District operates the Bamfield water system and is working with Island Health to ensure solutions that address both THM and HAAs and adequate treatment so drinking water is safe and reliable.

Where can I get more information?

- Health Canada – Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality: Guideline Technical Documents: Haloacetic acids, located at:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/pubs/water-eau/haloaceti/index-eng.php>
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/alt_formats/hecs-sesc/pdf/pubs/water-eau/haloaceti/haloaceti-eng.pdf
- Health Canada – Drinking Water Chlorination, located at:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/environ/chlor-eng.php>
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/alt_formats/pacrb-dgapcr/pdf/iyh-vsv/environ/chlor-eng.pdf