

**AUBURN WATER DISTRICT**  
**75 CHURCH STREET – PO BOX 187 – AUBURN MA 01501**  
**(508) 832-5336 FAX (508) 832-5338**

**Commissioners**

Joseph V. Miller III-Chairman  
Terrence J. Hastings-Vice Chairman  
Alexander L. Spanos

**Clerk**

David P. Doherty  
**Treasurer**  
Philip R. Shea Jr.

**Superintendent**

Gregory Woods

May 25, 2021

Dear Auburn Water District Customer,

The Public Notification on the back of this letter is required by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) due to elevated levels of arsenic detected in water samples from one of our wells at the South Street facility in April, 2021. This facility supplies water to the low-pressure distribution system that serves eastern Auburn, excluding those customers within the Woodland and Elm Hill Water Districts that get their water from the City of Worcester. Customers in the Auburn high-pressure system have their water supplied by other facilities and were not affected by this detection.

Due to the historically low arsenic concentrations (i.e., below laboratory method detection limits), the District was only required by the MassDEP to sample the wells at South Street once every three years. Samples collected since 1997 have been “non-detect”, except for one sample collected in 2011. We were understandably surprised to receive laboratory results that were not only above the laboratory’s detection limits, but above the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) of 10 parts per billion. The facility was immediately taken off-line after the April 2021 sample and it will remain so while we investigate our options. For reference, several other wells within Town have raw water concentrations of arsenic above the MCL, however we have treatment plants to remove the arsenic to levels that meet the Federal and State regulatory drinking water standards.

The District takes public health and compliance with regulatory standards very seriously and will keep you updated on the status of any changes to this facility.

Sincerely,

Auburn Water District



Gregory Woods  
Superintendent

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER

To all customers of Auburn Water District located in Auburn, Massachusetts  
Arsenic has been detected above Drinking Water Standards

***This is an important notice - please translate it for anyone who does not understand English.***

This notice is to advise our customers that our water system is in noncompliance with the drinking water standard for **arsenic**. Although this is *not an emergency*, you have a right to know what happened, what you should do, and what we are doing to correct this situation.

We routinely monitor for the presence of drinking water contaminants at each of our drinking water sources. **Our water system recently received notification of arsenic results showing that our system violated the 10 parts per billion (ppb) Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) drinking water standard during the April – June 2021 compliance period with a running annual average of 12 ppb at our South St. Water Treatment Facility. This facility was removed from service on April 5, 2021.**

Samples collected on April 2, 2021 and April 5, 2021, showed levels of arsenic at 46 and 52 ppb, respectively. Exceedance of the MCL has been determined from the April results. Compliance with the arsenic MCL is calculated as a running annual average each calendar quarter; even if results for the remaining quarters in the annual compliance period are zero, the average of the four quarters will still exceed the standard.

The location where the elevated level of arsenic was reported is one of six facilities that supplies drinking water to our system. Arsenic levels have been reported below the MCL at our other facilities.

## **What does this mean?**

This is not an immediate risk. If it had been, you would have been notified right away. ***Some people who drink water containing arsenic in excess of the MCL over many years could experience skin damage or problems with their circulatory system and may have an increased risk of getting cancer.*** The MCL is based on the average individual consuming 2 liters of water a day for a lifetime. However, children and pregnant women may be at increased risk and should seek advice from their health care providers if they have any concerns. Children are at greater risk (to any agent in water) because of their greater water consumption on a per unit body weight basis. Hand washing, bathing and showering in water that contains arsenic at these levels does not pose a known risk to human health. Arsenic is not easily absorbed through the skin and does not evaporate into the air.

Further health information is available from EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791 and at the EPA Arsenic in Drinking water website <https://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/chemical-contaminant-rules>. And <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi?Dockey=60000E1E.txt>

## **What happened? What is being done?**

Arsenic occurs naturally as a contaminant in some groundwater in Massachusetts, most frequently in the central part of the state. It can also be a by-product of some agricultural and industrial activities. Drinking water from bedrock wells, also called drilled or artesian wells, gravel developed wells and less frequently from shallow or dug wells, may contain arsenic.

The South Street Water Treatment Facility has been removed from service. We are working with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) to evaluate the water supply and research options to correct the problem, which may include treating the water to remove the contaminant.

For more information please contact Greg Woods, Superintendent at 508-832-5336 or PO Box 187, Auburn, MA 01501.

***Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.***

PWSID#: 2017000