



Rosamond Community Services District

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Hexavalent Chromium

Every RCSD customer recently received notice of hexavalent chromium above the drinking water standard. It is true that water sourced from RCSD wells 8 and 9 have higher chromium levels than are permitted by California state regulation, but, like many things in life, there is more to the story.

What is Hexavalent Chromium?

Hexavalent chromium, also known as chromium 6, is an odorless and tasteless metallic element that occurs naturally in the environment from the erosion of natural chromium deposits. The amount of chromium 6 in drinking water is regulated because it is known to cause cancer in studies of laboratory animals at high concentrations.

You may have heard about chromium 6 from the 2000 film Erin Brockovich, which was about chromium 6 contamination in Hinkley, California. This case is important in the history of drinking water regulation, but

the unusually high chromium 6 levels in the drinking water in Hinkley were the result of industrial pollution, not naturally occurring chromium 6.

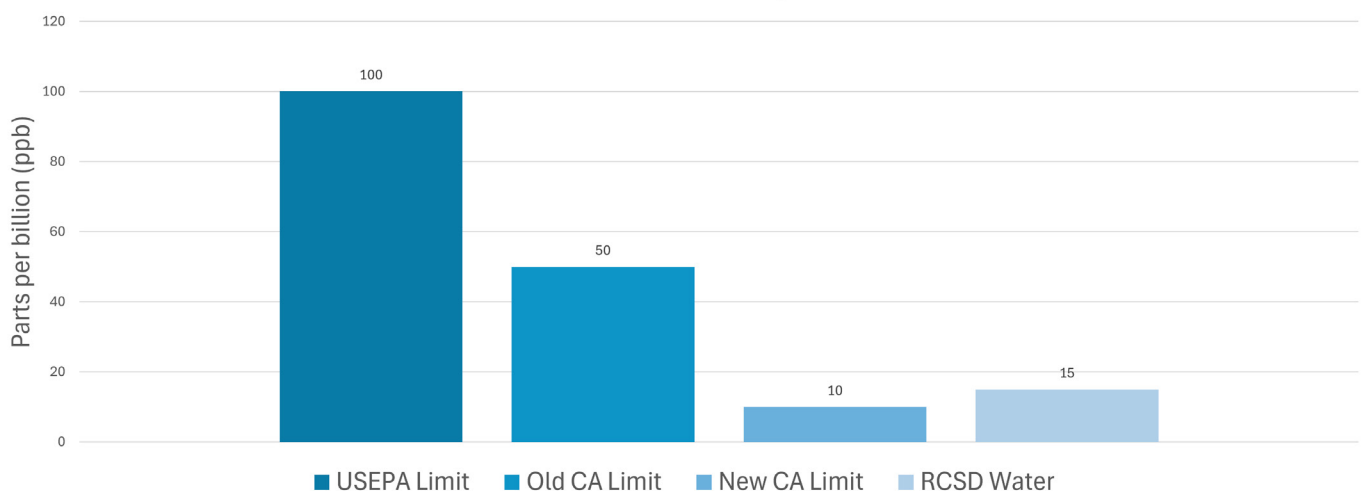
What is a safe level?

How much chromium 6 in drinking water is considered safe? The answer depends on where you live. In 1991, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) set the maximum permissible level of all chromium, including chromium 6, in public water systems at 100 parts per billion (ppb). The maximum recorded level of chromium 6 in Hinkley, California, drinking water was 580 ppb, almost six times the EPA standard.

The EPA revisited chromium 6 and released a draft of the scientific human health assessment (Toxicological Review of Hexavalent Chromium) for public comment and external peer review in 2010. The EPA's limit for chromium 6 in drinking water remains unchanged.

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Chromium in Drinking Water



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California has more restrictive rules regarding chromium 6 in drinking water. Since 1977, the California State Water Resources Control Board has set the maximum level of total chromium, including chromium 6, allowed in drinking water at 50 ppb, or half the EPA limit. In 2024, they set the maximum allowable limit of chromium 6 at 10 ppb, or one-tenth the amount considered safe by the EPA.

In the second quarter of 2026, RCSD water had naturally occurring chromium 6 levels of 12 to 15 ppb, which is well below the EPA limit of 100 ppb but above the new California limit of 10 ppb. This is why RCSD customers recently received notices about chromium 6 levels with their bills.

What is next?

California water agencies are required to comply with the chromium 6 limits in 2026 through 2028, depending on their size. There are generally two ways to reduce the amount of chromium 6 in water. One way is to blend water with higher levels of chromium 6 with water with lower levels, diluting it to an acceptable level. The other way is to chemically remove the chromium 6 from the water in a process called ion exchange. This involves installing equipment that uses resin to remove the chromium 6. This resin must be regularly regenerated with a brine solution, which then becomes hazardous and must be disposed of properly.

What is RCSD doing?

RCSD is evaluating the options available to reduce the chromium 6 levels in our water. Our goal is to meet the California standards while keeping rates as low as possible. Both blending and ion exchange impose increased costs, though ion exchange is considerably

Help Your Hose

Your hose can be a big source of water waste, especially during summer. The good news is that it's also one of the easiest to fix. Start by making sure you only use your hose with a nozzle that automatically turns off when you're not using it, like a spray gun. This helps ensure that the water only flows when and where you want it to go. You can also usually fix leaky connections on your hose by replacing the rubber washers inside them. These rubber washers are widely available at hardware stores and are inexpensive. Another great way to save water with your hose is not to use it. When it's time to clean your sidewalk and driveway, consider using a broom instead of a hose.

more expensive due to the additional equipment required and ongoing resin regeneration. These costs associated with meeting the new California standards will impact the rates our customers pay for water.

RCSD has until October 1st, 2027 to implement a solution. Customers can expect to continue receiving occasional notices as we work to find a way to comply with state regulations while keeping rates as low as possible. We appreciate your trust and patience and are happy to answer any additional questions you have.

You can learn more about chromium 6 at the websites below.

<https://www.epa.gov/sdwa/chromium-drinking-water>

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Chromium6.html

