

Town of Bowling Green

2024 Gross Alpha Drinking Water

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the issue?

On March 8, 2024, the Town was advised by State Health Officials that the water system has exceeded the primary maximum contaminant level (PMCL) for gross alpha over the most recent four quarters of testing. The standard for gross alpha is 15 pCi/L. The average level of gross alpha over the last year has been 25.8 pCi/L at one of the groundwater wells that supplies the system (entry point 4) and 30.025 pCi/L at one of the other wells (entry point 5).

What is Gross Alpha?

Gross alpha is a term used in the field of environmental health and radiation protection. It refers to the total alpha radiation activity in a sample, including all alpha-emitting radionuclides present. Alpha radiation consists of high-energy alpha particles emitted by certain radioactive elements. Some people who experience long term exposure by drinking water containing alpha emitters in excess of the PMCL over many years may have an increased risk of getting cancer.

Has this issue happened before and if so, what actions took place, then?

The Town has had instances of elevated gross alpha dating back to 1992, 1996, and 2006. Each time, gross alpha levels returned to allowable amounts based on state standards after additional testing.

Is this an emergency?

This is not an emergency. If this was an emergency you would have been notified within 24 hours. There are no immediate health risks or symptoms from drinking water that contains gross alpha radiation.

How does the town monitor our water to make sure it is safe?

The Town routinely monitors the water supply for the presence of drinking water contaminants by daily, monthly, quarterly and yearly testing as required by state regulatory agencies, such as the Virginia Department of Health.

How will the problem be solved?

The Town is actively taking measures to return to full compliance with gross alpha limits and has already contracted with a professional engineering firm to develop a plan of action. The Town will continue to regularly test the water from entry points at wells 4 & 5 and will remain in constructive discussions with State Health Officials as it considers the most appropriate next steps.

Will I be notified once levels are back to normal standards?

Yes, the Town will notify all customers once levels return within acceptable levels.

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What should I do as a water customer? Should I be concerned?

There is nothing you need to do. As confirmed by State Health Officials, there are no recommended precautions necessary, e.g., you do not need to boil your water or take other corrective actions before using or consuming it. However, if you have specific health questions or concerns, you can always consult your doctor.

Who do I contact for additional information?

For additional information you may contact India Adams-Jacobs, Bowling Green Town Manager at 804- 633-6212. Please be advised that for technical questions you may be referred to the current licensed operator of the Town's water system, Caroline County Public Works & Utilities.