

# **MONTANA'S 2023 Annual Public Water System Compliance Report**

## **The Drinking Water Program: An Overview**

The EPA established the Public Water System Supervision (PWSS) Program under the authority of the 1974 Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). Under the SDWA and the 1986 Amendments, EPA sets national limits on contaminant levels in drinking water to ensure that the water is safe for human consumption. These limits are known as Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) and the Maximum Residual Disinfectant Levels (MRDLs). For some regulations, EPA establishes treatment techniques in lieu of an MCL to control unacceptable levels of contaminants in water. The Agency also regulates how often public water systems (PWSs) monitor their water for contaminants and report the monitoring results to the states or EPA. Generally, the larger the population served by a water system, the more frequent the monitoring and reporting (M/R) requirements. In addition, EPA requires PWSs to monitor for unregulated contaminants to provide data for future regulatory development. Finally, EPA requires PWSs to notify their consumers when they have violated these regulations. The 1996 Amendments to the SDWA require consumer notification to include a clear and understandable explanation of the nature of the violation, its potential adverse health effects, steps that the PWS is undertaking to correct the violation, and the possibility of alternative water supplies during the violation.

The SDWA applies to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Indian Lands, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The SDWA allows states and territories to seek EPA approval to administer their own PWSS Programs. The authority to run a PWSS Program is called primacy. For a state to receive primacy, EPA must determine that the state meets certain requirements laid out in the SDWA and the regulations, including the adoption of drinking water regulations that are at least as stringent as the Federal regulations and a demonstration that they can enforce the program requirements. Of the 56 states and territories, all but Wyoming and the District of Columbia have primacy. The EPA Regional Offices administer the PWSS Programs within these two jurisdictions.

The 1986 SDWA Amendments gave Indian Tribes the right to apply for and receive primacy. EPA currently administers PWSS Programs on all Indian lands except the Navaho Nation, which was granted primacy in late 2000.

## **Public Water System**

A "Public water supply system" means a system for the provision of water for human consumption from a community well, water hauler for cisterns, water bottling plant, water dispenser, or other water supply that has at least 15 service connections or that regularly serves at least 25 persons daily for any 60 or more days in a calendar

year. There are three types of PWSs. PWSs can be community (such as towns), non-transient noncommunity (such as schools or factories), or transient noncommunity systems (such as rest stops or parks). For this report, when the acronym “PWS” is used it means systems of all types unless specified in greater detail.

### **Maximum Contaminant Level**

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), the EPA sets national limits on contaminant levels in drinking water to ensure that the water is safe for human consumption. These limits are known as Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs).

### **Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level**

The EPA sets national limits on residual disinfectant levels in drinking water to reduce the risk of exposure to disinfectant byproducts formed, when public water systems add chemical disinfectant for either primary or residual treatment. These limits are known as Maximum Residual Disinfectant Levels (MRDLs).

### **Treatment Techniques**

For some regulations, the EPA establishes treatment techniques (TTs) in lieu of an MCL to control unacceptable levels of certain contaminants. For example, treatment techniques have been established for viruses, some bacteria, and turbidity.

### **Monitoring and Reporting**

A PWS is required to monitor and verify that the levels of contaminants present in the water do not exceed the MCL. If a PWS fails to have its water tested as required or fails to report test results correctly to the primacy agent, a monitoring and/or reporting violation occurs.

### **Significant Monitoring and Reporting Violations**

For this report, significant monitoring violations are generally defined as any significant monitoring violation that occurred during the calendar year of the report. A significant monitoring violation, with rare exceptions, occurs when no samples were taken, or no results were reported during a compliance period.

### **Consumer Notification**

Every Community Water System is required to deliver to its customers a brief annual water quality report. This report is to include some educational material, and will provide information on the source water, the levels of any detected contaminants, and compliance with drinking water regulations.

### **Significant Consumer Notification Violations**

For this report, a significant consumer notification violation occurred if a community

water system completely failed to provide its customers the required annual water quality report.

### **Significant Public Notification Violations**

For this report, significant public notification violation occurs when a PWS completely fails to notify its consumers that the PWS violated a national primary drinking water regulation or had a situation posing a risk to public health.

### **Annual State PWS Report**

Each quarter, primacy states submit data to the Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS/FED), an automated database maintained by EPA. The data submitted include, but are not limited to, PWS inventory information, the incidence of Maximum Contaminant Level, Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level, monitoring, and treatment technique violations; and information on enforcement activity related to these violations. Section 1414(c)(3)(A) of the Safe Drinking Water Act requires states to provide EPA with an annual report of violations of the primary drinking water standards. This report covers the period of January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, and provides the numbers of violations in each of six categories: MCLs, MRDLs, treatment techniques, variances and exemptions, significant monitoring violations, and significant consumer notification violations. Montana's inventory of public water supplies varies in number but currently includes 774 community systems, 1163 transient non-community systems, and 299 non-transient non-community systems. The EPA Regional Offices report the information for Wyoming, the District of Columbia, and all Indian Lands but the Navaho Nation. EPA Regional offices also report Federal enforcement actions taken. Data retrieved from SDWIS/FED form the basis of this report.

### **OBTAINING A COPY OF THE 2020 PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS REPORT**

As required by the Safe Drinking Water Act, the State of Montana has made the 2023 Public Water Systems report available to the public. Interested individuals can obtain a copy of the 2023 Annual Public Water Systems Report for Montana by accessing:

State Website: [Drinking Water | Montana DEQ \(mt.gov\)](https://drinkingwater.mt.gov)

Telephone: (406) 444-6781

E-Mail: [ehenrikson2@mt.gov](mailto:ehenrikson2@mt.gov)

Address: DEQ/PWS  
P.O. Box 200901  
Helena, MT 59620-0901

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## Description of Report

The attached report is broken down by rule into two types of violations, MCL (maximum contaminant level) and monitoring. Each violation type lists three categories, “# of Violations”, “# of return to compliance (RTC) Violations”, and “# of PWS in Violation”. The following is a description of each:

# of Violations, this describes the total number of violations created for each regulated contaminant. Since violations are associated with sample point locations, it is possible for one system to have more than one violation for the same contaminant.

# of RTC Violations, RTC violations are violations that were created, but that have since been returned to compliance.

# of PWS in Violation, this indicates the number of systems that are responsible for the total number of violations listed for each rule. Thus, there may be more total violations than total systems.

Rule Group	Rule Name	Violation Category	# of Violations	# of RTC Violations	# of PWS in Violation
CHEMS	Arsenic	Maximum Contaminant Level	1	0	1
CHEMS	Nitrates	Maximum Contaminant Level	21	0	10
CHEMS	Radionuclides	Maximum Contaminant Level	6	0	1
DBPs	Stage 2 Disinfectant and Disinfection Byproducts Rule	Maximum Contaminant Level	18	3	10
Microbials	Revised Total Coliform Rule	Maximum Contaminant Level	7	7	7
<b>Total</b>		Maximum Contaminant Level	53	10	29

Rule Group	Rule Name	Violation Category	# of Violations	# of RTC Violations	# of PWS in Violation
Microbials	Revised Total Coliform Rule	Monitoring	505	433	255
<b>Total</b>		Monitoring	505	433	255

Rule Group	Rule Name	Violation Category	# of Violations	# of RTC Violations	# of PWS in Violation
CHEMS	Arsenic	Monitoring & Reporting	2	2	2
CHEMS	Inorganic Chemicals	Monitoring & Reporting	5	4	4
CHEMS	Lead and Copper Rule	Monitoring & Reporting	137	13	117
CHEMS	Nitrates	Monitoring & Reporting	113	50	107
CHEMS	Radionuclides	Monitoring & Reporting	21	21	6
CHEMS	Synthetic Organic Chemicals	Monitoring & Reporting	276	253	6
CHEMS	Volatile Organic Chemicals	Monitoring & Reporting	126	21	6
DBPs	Stage 1 Disinfectant and Disinfection Byproducts Rule	Monitoring & Reporting	6	3	5
DBPs	Stage 2 Disinfectant and Disinfection Byproducts Rule	Monitoring & Reporting	52	4	24
Microbials	Ground Water Rule	Monitoring & Reporting	157	100	111
CHEMS	Montana Chlorination Rule	Monitoring & Reporting	289	268	125
Microbials	Long Term 2 Enhanced SWTR	Monitoring & Reporting	1	0	1
Microbials	SWTR	Monitoring & Reporting	8	1	4
<b>Total</b>		Monitoring & Reporting	1193	740	518

<b>Rule Group</b>	<b>Rule Name</b>	<b>Violation Category</b>	<b># of Violations</b>	<b># of RTC Violations</b>	<b># of PWS in Violation</b>
Microbials	Ground Water Rule	Other Violation	2	1	2
Microbials	Revised Coliform Rule	Other Violation	13	12	13
Other	Consumer Confidence Rule	Other Violation	110	81	100
<b>Total</b>		Other Violation	125	94	115

<b>Rule Group</b>	<b>Rule Name</b>	<b>Violation Category</b>	<b># of Violations</b>	<b># of RTC Violations</b>	<b># of PWS in Violation</b>
CHEMS	Lead and Copper	Treatment Technique	5	1	4
Microbials	Ground Water Rule	Treatment Technique	16	13	13
Microbials	Revised Total Coliform Rule	Treatment Technique	106	74	96
Microbials	Surface Water Treatment Rule	Treatment Technique	9	3	8
Microbials	Long Term 2 Enhanced SWTR	Treatment Technique	12	0	1
CHEMS	Montana Chlorination Rule	Treatment Technique	103	88	53
<b>Total</b>		Treatment Technique	251	179	175