



Rosario Water System
State ID #74270J

November 14, 2008

IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER
Treatment Technique Violation (Treatment Requirements Not Met)

The Rosario Water System, State ID#74270J, located in San Juan County and owned by Washington Water Service Company, uses treated surface water from Cascade Lake for drinking water. A series of physical and chemical processes are used to remove contaminants and to kill any disease-causing organisms that may be present in the water. During the late evening of October 10, 2008, and continuing on into the early morning of October 11, 2008, the Rosario Water Treatment Plant produced water that was only partially treated due to the failure of one of its treatment components. This partially treated water did make its way into the water system that serves the customers and businesses on the Rosario water system and homes in the Orcas Highlands community. The Orcas Highlands Water System receives its water from the Rosario Water System through a master meter. Surface water that is only partially treated poses an increased chance that the water contains disease-causing organisms. Although this situation does not require that you should take immediate action, as our customers, you have a right to know what happened, what you should do and what we did to correct the situation.

What happened? During a 13-hour period beginning late on October 10, 2008 and continuing into the morning of October 11, 2008, the Rosario Water Treatment Plant had a failure in its pretreatment chemical feed system. A chemical coagulant is required to be added at the beginning of the treatment process to enhance the ability of the filters to remove suspended particles and microorganisms. Having lost coagulant feed, the treatment plant was not filtering properly. Automatic controls sensed this change but were unable to shut the plant down and were also unable to make contact with system operators who were on-call. Consequently, the plant repeated attempts to restore performance by backwashing the filters and returning them to service. This continued until detected by the system operators the following morning. During that 13-hour period, there were approximately 4 hours where the treatment plant delivered improperly filtered water to the water system that serves the Rosario and Orcas Highlands communities. The water treatment plant did, however, continue to properly disinfect with ozone and did continue to maintain chlorine throughout the water system. Coagulant feed was restored by the operators upon discovering the problem the morning of October 11, 2008, bringing all treatment plant processes back into full compliance with drinking water standards. The loss of coagulant feed should have prompted a phone call by Washington Water to the Dept of Health that same day but, regrettably, that was not done.

What does this mean? Inadequately treated water may contain disease-causing organisms. These organisms may include bacteria, viruses and parasites that can cause symptoms such as nausea, cramps, diarrhea and associated headaches. The symptoms above are not caused only by organisms in drinking water. If you experience any of these symptoms and they persist, you may want to seek medical advice.

What should I do? You do not need to boil your water or take other corrective actions. However, if you have specific health concerns, you should consult with your doctor. People with severely compromised immune systems, infants and some elderly people would have been at increased risk. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by microbes are available from the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.

What steps are being taken to prevent this from happening again? Process controls are being modified to ensure immediate and automatic plant shut down upon detecting loss of filter performance. Enhancements are also being made to the systems and methods used to communicate with operating personnel including the scheduled installation of off-island repeater based 2-way radios.

For more information, please contact Local Manager Roy Stanton, Washington Water Service Company, toll-free at 877-408-4060.

Please share this notice 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.

cc: Steve Deem, P.E. – Northwest Office of Drinking Water, Washington State Department of Health
Mark Tompkins – San Juan County Health Department
James Hennessee – Orcas Highlands Association, Inc
Rosario Water Quality Files
Customer Notice Binders
W:\Customer Service\Customer Notices\Year 2008\Rosario Treatment Technique Violation Notice to Customers 11-14-08.doc