



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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TRACE AMOUNTS OF ORGANIC CHEMICALS FOUND IN ONE MAUI WATER WELL

Findings do not represent a health threat

HONOLULU - During routine sampling of drinking water systems across the state, the Department of Health (DOH) found minute trace amounts of certain organic chemicals in the Maunaolu-Smith Well on Maui. The well supplies the Maunaolu Plantation water system in Kula, which serves a population of about 60 persons. The well water is treated with granular activated carbon (GAC) filtration before being sent to consumers and the treated water meets state and federal standards for safe drinking water.

"These findings do not represent a health threat," said Laurence Lau, Deputy Director for Environmental Health. "The Department of Health is maintaining active surveillance of the well and will continue to monitor this source to ensure that public health is not compromised."

Trichloroethylene (TCE) was detected at between 0.2 and 0.5 parts per billion (ppb). The federal and state Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for TCE is 5 ppb. The state and federal standards are set to avoid health risks based on a lifetime of consuming water containing that level of contaminant. TCE is a common metal-cleaning and dry-cleaning fluid. It generally gets into drinking water by improper waste disposal.

1,2-Dibromo-3-Chloropropane (DBCP) has been detected at between 0.02 and 0.04 ppb. The federal MCL for DBCP is 0.2 ppb, but the state adopted a more stringent MCL of 0.04 ppb. DBCP was used to kill nematodes in pineapple cultivation in Hawaii before its ban by the EPA in 1986.

Ethylene dibromide, (EDB) has been detected at 0.2 ppb, above the federal MCL of 0.05 ppb. The state MCL is 0.04 ppb. EDB was used as a pesticide and fumigant in pineapple cultivation in Hawaii prior to its ban by the EPA in 1983.

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1,2,3-Trichloropropane (TCP) has been detected at 0.71 ppb. While there is no federal standard for TCP, the state MCL is 0.6 ppb. TCP was a contaminant of soil fumigants that were used in the pineapple fields.

Although the concentrations of EDB and TCP at the wellhead were above the MCL, the drinking water after treatment does not contain any detectable TCE, DBCP, EDB or TCP.

DBCP, EDB and TCP have been previously detected in the Maunaolu-Smith Well. This required well water to be treated with granular activated carbon (GAC) filtration before being sent to consumers.

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