

[The Arizona Republic](#)

Diana Balazs

The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality is the latest government agency to announce an investigation into how unsafe levels of a suspected cancer-causing agent got into the drinking water supply of nearly 5,000 customers in Paradise Valley and Scottsdale.

A three-day ban on using tap water provided by the Arizona American Water to residential and commercial customers was lifted Saturday.

Since Wednesday, customers had been told not to drink their tap water or use it to prepare food because of unsafe levels of TCE, or trichloroethylene, after a TEC treatment plan in Scottsdale malfunctioned and was shut down on Tuesday.

The tap water now meets or surpasses all government standards for drinking water, Arizona American announced Saturday.

Steve Owens, director of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, said the results of 16 samples received Saturday morning all indicated that TCE levels were well below the maximum allowable level of 5 parts per billion.

Owens said ADEQ would take steps to prevent future incidents from happening, and the agency is considering enforcement action, including penalties.

Arizona American Water conducted tests throughout the water system. The test results were reviewed and approved by ADEQ and the Maricopa County Health Department.

Arizona American's TCE treatment facility remains shut down at Miller Road and McDonald Drive. Water is being treated at another facility at Cattle Track and McDonald. The water company is investigating why the plant malfunctioned and will take corrective measures, said spokesman Todd Walker.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Arizona Corporation Commission and Paradise Valley officials also are looking into the matter.

U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell, D-Ariz., who represents the northeast Valley, said he will bring up the matter at a congressional hearing Feb. 7. Mitchell is a member of the House Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment, which oversees the EPA.

The EPA issued a statement that due to the short-term duration of the exposure, the public should not experience any adverse health effects from tap water that was consumed in the 24-hour period prior to notification and shutting down of the system.

Tap-water Ban Lifted; Another Agency Joins Investigations

Friday, 18 January 2008 20:00

This would apply to both children and adults consuming up to 6 liters of water per day when TCE levels exceeded federal drinking water standards.

Nonetheless, residents with concerns regarding their particular health condition should consult their medical provider, the EPA advises.

Customers may have been exposed to the unsafe levels for up to 16 hours. At one point the level were more than four times that allowed by the EPA, according to tests of the water.

Arizona American Water notified customers Saturday via automated phone calls that the water is now acceptable to drink. Its initial phone notification Wednesday reached only a small number of customers.

The Paradise Valley and Scottsdale police departments also notified Arizona American customers Saturday that the ban had been lifted through an automated reverse 911-telephone message.

Paradise Valley Police Chief John Wintersteen said Saturday that the message was sent to 50,000 phone lines. Many customers have more than one phone line. A message also was sent to TTY phone customers who are hearing impaired.

It cost an estimated \$23,000 to send out the police phone notification.

The distribution of free bottled water has ended. Customers with storage tanks on their property should drain and refill their tanks. Arizona American is also advising customers to run their water briefly to flush out their systems, as well as remove water from their hot water tanks. Hot water tanks could contain the initial tainted water.

Customers with questions may e-mail infoaz@amwater.com or call 800-383-0834.