Water Quality Advisory Lifted

Water quality in the fire-impacted neighborhood of Fountaingrove has been restored and the drinking water advisory has been lifted. After nearly a year of investigating the cause, identifying a solution, and performing targeted repairs to the fire-damaged water system, water being delivered to fire-impacted residents in the Fountaingrove area meets all safe drinking water standards.

The restoration of water quality to the Fountaingrove area included replacing water services to all 352 properties and performing targeted replacement of blow-off valves, hydrants, and portions of water main. Once the repairs were completed, the water system was restored to normal operations and every water service in the Advisory Area was resampled to confirm the contamination was removed. In addition, the water quality team took weekly samples from 65 locations in the Advisory Area, as well as samples from the 13 surviving homes. After four weeks of post-construction sampling, the data confirmed that the water system repairs were effective in removing the contamination, and water quality in the area met all state and federal standards for safe drinking water.

...the water system repairs were effective in removing the contamination...

In consultation with the California Division of Drinking Water and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the City of Santa Rosa lifted the Water Quality Advisory on October 11, 2018. Now that the advisory has been lifted and water quality is restored, the City is committed to providing monitoring of water quality and ongoing communication to affected residents. To view the City’s monitoring data and updates, please visit srcity.org/WQAdvisory.
Rebuilding Efforts Gaining Momentum in Fountaingrove

The first two homes in the hillside neighborhood of Fountaingrove have been rebuilt and are ready for occupancy. Homeowners in the Fountaingrove neighborhood, as well as other areas affected by the fires, have shown tremendous resiliency, and the area is busy with lots of construction activity.

One year into the rebuild efforts, more than 270 homes have initiated the rebuilding permit process or are under construction in Fountaingrove.

Residents ready to occupy their newly built homes in the area will be connected to a safe drinking water supply. To ensure the safety of Fountaingrove’s drinking water, the City will continue to monitor water quality in the area to ensure it is meeting all safe drinking water standards.

Fountaingrove Homeowner Thankful for Resolution

When Jan Verspecht returned in November 2017 to his Fountaingrove home, which miraculously survived the Tubbs fire, he was alerted of the water contamination through a City flyer. When Verspecht, an electrical engineer at Keysight Technologies, learned that the contaminants were volatile organic compounds (VOCs), he decided to have a filter system installed so his family could use water the same way they did before the devastating fire. The City also delivered water to him in a water truck.

After the City announced that the water quality issue has been resolved and regular testing will continue for as long as necessary, Verspecht welcomed the news.

“I am thankful for the resolution of the water quality issue by the City as it is a big step forward for the rebuilding of our Fountaingrove neighborhood.”

~ Jan Verspecht

More than 270 homes have initiated the rebuilding permit process or are under construction in Fountaingrove.
Monitoring and Water Testing Will Continue

As a result of the City’s targeted repairs designed to remove the contamination from the water system in Fountain-grove, water quality has been restored, and the water continues to meet all state and federal standards for safe drinking water. The City worked closely with the California Division of Drinking Water and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on a water sampling plan to confirm that the repairs have been effective in resolving the contamination.

Now that the advisory has been lifted, periodic water flushing and sampling will ensure the contamination has been eliminated and does not recur.

Testing of the water from all 65 hydrants and three sample stations in the Advisory Area will follow this schedule:
- Once every two weeks for the first two months
- Once a month during months three through six
- Once per quarter during months seven through 12

At that point, sampling frequency will return to the normally-required quarterly level from two sample stations in the Advisory Area. Flushing of mains in the Advisory Area through blow-offs or hydrants will be done periodically in accordance with Best Management Practices.

Samples taken on October 3, 2018 show water quality meets all state and federal safe drinking water requirements.

Sampling data is available online at srcity.org/WQAdvisory

Background and Success of Phased Project Approach

The Tubbs fire of October 2017 melted water pipes in Fountain-grove and contaminated portions of the region’s water system with benzene, a cancer-causing chemical. Since then, the City of Santa Rosa has been working with State and Federal agencies, toxicologists, forensic chemists, and national water quality experts to understand the precise causes and extent of the contamination, and to resolve the water quality issues.

The intensive investigation and analysis concluded that melted plastics, smoke, soot, and ash entering the water system during the fires was the source of the contamination. The City also learned that the highest levels of contamination were occurring in water service lines, the pipelines that connect the water main in the streets to a property’s water meter. It is noteworthy that soil sampling did not identify any sources of contamination in the ground, and historic sampling records showed no reports of benzene in the water system prior to the fires.

Using the data collected, the City used a phased approach in replacing the physical water system components to all 352 properties in the advisory area, including 28 blow-off valves, eight hydrants, and three sections of water main. These targeted repairs effectively removed the contamination and restored water quality to drinking water standards.
The process to lift the advisory included a methodology of taking a series of recurring water samples. All water service lines were sampled post replacement and 10% were resampled to confirm results. Samples were also pulled weekly from 65 locations to ensure water quality met all safe drinking water standards. The sample results were then reviewed by DDW and the EPA before the advisory was lifted. Additionally, the City will perform ongoing monitoring after lifting the advisory, to provide assurance to the City’s drinking water regulators and the community that the water continues to meet water quality standards.