

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and Virginia Department of Health (VDH) currently require that an annual report on water quality be provided to all public water customers. The VDH requires that these reports, known locally as Consumer Confidence Reports (CCR) be delivered by June 30. Over the next few weeks, City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA) water customers will be receiving a copy of the local drinking water report.

Drinking water standards are developed by USEPA and VDH, and Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA) tests the drinking water to ensure that these standards are met. Throughout the year RWSA samples water collected from local rivers, reservoirs, water treatment plants and from locations throughout the distribution system. Hundreds of hourly, daily and annual samples are completed each year.

The CCR offers RWSA, the City and ACSA the opportunity to share the results of all of these tests with the community and to reassure them that the quality of our local drinking water exceeds all of the regulatory requirements.

It is expected that all drinking water, even bottled water, will contain some small level of contaminants and their presence does not necessarily pose a health risk. Water comes in contact with contaminants as it travels over the land or through the soil and dissolves materials that are either naturally occurring or present as a result of human activities. The USEPA maintains a website at [www.epa.gov/safewater](http://www.epa.gov/safewater) that provides information about the potential health effects of various contaminants. While expected, RWSA, the City and ACSA still do their best to ensure that contaminants are kept well below allowable levels.

The contaminants reported on in our local CCRs include turbidity, total and fecal coliform bacteria, alpha and beta particles, fluoride, lead and copper and trihalomethanes and haloacetic acids.

Turbidity is a measure of how clear the drinking water is. It has no direct health effects, yet may indicate the presence of disease-causing organisms.

Coliform bacteria are naturally occurring bacteria and are used as indicators that other potentially harmful bacteria may be present. They also indicate a possible contamination by human or animal waste. Short-term effects such as diarrhea, nausea and headaches may occur after exposure.

Alpha and beta particles also occur naturally. Some minerals are radioactive and may emit radiation when eroded into the water source. Consuming excess levels of alpha and beta particles over many years could increase risk for cancer.

Flouride is reported in the CCR as it is an additive in treated water. Flouride is added to promote strong teeth, but if consumed in excess over many years it could contribute to bone disease or mottled teeth in children.

Lead levels are reported because excessive levels can cause developmental delays in children and kidney problems or high blood pressure in adults.

Copper, while an essential nutrient, can cause gastrointestinal distress if consumed in excess.

Trihalomethanes and haloacetic acids form when chlorine interacts with naturally occurring organic matter. If consumed in excess there may be an increased risk of cancer.

Locally, these contaminants are present in quantities well below the allowable levels developed by the USEPA and VDH. Our water sources and water treatment plants are of supreme quality, thus allowing RWSA, the City and ACSA to provide customers with high quality water, and the piece of mind in knowing our friends and families are drinking good, safe water.