

ORANGE WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

A public, non-profit agency providing water, sewer and reclaimed water services to the Carrboro-Chapel Hill community.

NEWS RELEASE September 21, 2009

OWASA receives NC Notice of Violation of drinking water monitoring standards in April, 2009

On September 3rd, OWASA received a Notice of Violation (NOV) from the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources because OWASA tested 79 instead of the required 80 water samples for coliform bacteria in April, 2009. OWASA staff made a mistake in counting the number of water samples taken at locations approved by the State.

However, OWASA tested for coliform bacteria at 103 locations overall in April, because OWASA tests water in response to customers' requests, when new water mains are installed, etc.

Coliform bacteria were not found in any of the 103 samples which OWASA tested in April. However, none of the additional 24 samples in April were taken from the locations approved by the State. Therefore, the State does not consider them as meeting the requirement to do 80 tests for regulatory purposes.

"We have made process changes since April to prevent this error from recurring. These changes include entering the data in the monthly report as the month progresses and verifying these counts on a weekly basis. Additionally, we now take more than 80 samples per month to add an extra margin of safety and ensure that the required number of samples are collected," said Ken Loflin, OWASA's Manager of Water Supply and Treatment.

As required under the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act, OWASA plans to mail a notice of the water monitoring violation to all of its billed customers in October. The notice will include the following Federally-required language: "We are required to monitor your drinking water for specific contaminants on a regular basis. Results of regular monitoring are an indicator of whether or not our drinking water meets health standards. During the compliance periods specified in the table below, we did not complete all monitoring of testing for contaminants listed below and therefore cannot be sure of the quality of our water during that time."

"Based on the total number of tests that we did, we believe that our drinking water in April, 2009 was safe to drink, despite the technical non-compliance with the monitoring requirement," Mr. Loflin said.

The NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources staff has advised OWASA that due to its extensive corrective actions, no administrative penalty will be issued.

OWASA's laboratory testing results in 2008 and related information on the community's water sources and the drinking water treatment process are reported in the utility's annual "Water Quality Report Card." OWASA customers received the Water Quality Report Card with bills mailed from late April to mid-May, and the report is available in the Water Quality page of the OWASA website, www.owasa.org/right/WaterQuality.aspx.

OWASA will test any customer's drinking water with no charge to the customer. For more information, customers are invited to contact Ms. Rachel Monschein, Laboratory Supervisor at the Jones Ferry Road Water Treatment Plant, at 537-4227 or rmonschein@owasa.org.

For more information:

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