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**State Environment Department issues Drinking Water Advisory Order for Village of Gabaldon**

(Santa Fe, NM) – Today, the New Mexico Environment Department’s Drinking Water Bureau (NMED-DWB) issued a violation for microbiological contamination to the Gabaldon Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association (MDWCA) and advised the citizens served by this water system to seek alternative sources of water. The Gabaldon MDWCA is located in San Miguel County approximately 10-15 miles southwest of Las Vegas, NM.

The Gabaldon MDWCA violation is due to the exceedance of the maximum contaminant level (MCL) for total coliform and *E.coli* bacteria. In addition, earlier this year the Gabaldon water system received a violation for an exceedance of the MCL for nitrate.

Consumers of the Gabaldon MDWCA should **NOT** boil the water. Boiling will eliminate the contamination due to bacteria; **however**, boiling will increase the level of nitrates in the water. Bottled water or other water from an approved water source should be used until further notice. Specific guidelines on the uses of water are provided below.

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**STEPS TO TAKE TO INSURE PROTECTION FROM MICROBIOLOGICAL CONTAMINATION?**

1. **FOR DRINKING OR COOKING**, use bottled water or:
  - Wash fruits and vegetables in bottled or alternative sources of safe water.
  - Ice should be made with bottled or alternative sources of safe water.
2. **FOR DISHWASHING**, use bottled water or alternative sources of safe water.
  - Wash dishes in the hottest water available and detergent. After rinsing, soak the dishes for 5 minutes in water with bleach added as a final rinse.
3. **FOR PERSONAL HYGIENE:**
  - Brush your teeth with bottled or alternative sources of safe water.
  - Showering and bathing is safe as long as you keep water out of your mouth.
4. **OTHER USES:**
  - Washing clothing in this water should be safe.
  - Pets should be given bottled or alternative sources of safe water
  - Plants are not affected by bacteria in water.

The presence of *E. coli* in water indicates that the water may have been in contact with sewage or animal wastes, and could contain disease-causing organisms. Most strains of *E. coli* are harmless and live in the intestines of healthy humans and animals. A positive test for *E. coli* in the drinking water supply does not necessarily indicate the presence of a dangerous strain of *E. coli* (such as *E. coli* O157:H7, which is sometimes associated with illnesses caused by contaminated food or water). Residents with health concerns should contact their medical providers.

Earlier this year the Gabaldon water system received a violation for an exceedance of the MCL for nitrate of 10 mg/ L set in Federal and State Drinking Water Regulations. Residents were asked to terminate the use of water for the purposes of feeding infants under 6 months old. Results from two water tests conducted in March indicated levels of 25.3 mg/L and 30.37 mg/L nitrate in the Gabaldon water system. More recent results from samples taken in May indicated a level of 11.7 mg/L and in July a level of 9.3 mg/L.

The Gabaldon MDWCA has received state funding to assist in securing a new water supply, which will address the nitrate problem.

Nitrate in drinking water is a serious health concern for infants less than six months old. Infants below the age of six months who drink water containing nitrate in excess of the MCL could become seriously ill and, if not given treatment, may die. Symptoms include shortness of breath and a blue or gray coloring of the skin (often referred to as “blue baby syndrome”). Symptoms in infants can develop rapidly, with health deteriorating over a period of days. Although infants under 6 months are at greatest risk, pregnant and nursing women and children under 8 years of age should limit their intake of tap water until nitrate levels decrease. If symptoms occur, seek medical attention **immediately**.

The DWB will continue to monitor Gabaldon MDWCA’s water system and provide technical assistance to address the *E. coli* and nitrate problems. Such assistance will help identify and eliminate possible sources of contamination, identify alternative water sources, and recommend treatment options for the water system.

For more information, contact Robert Gallegos, Hydrologist, NMED, at (505) 827-7536 x.1034 or toll free: (877) 654-8720 x.1034 or Darren Padilla, Hydrologist, NMED, at x.1044.

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