

**MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM, GOVERNOR**

James C. Kenney, Cabinet Secretary

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The Environment Department's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations.

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Environment Department issues report highlighting systematic failures at the Camino Real Regional Utility Authority*CRRUA management failed to protect water quality, inform customers*

DOÑA ANA COUNTY — The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) [released a report](#) by the Drinking Water Bureau (DWB) today on the systematic failures by management of the Camino Real Regional Utility Authority (CRRUA) that lead to the issuance of a multi-day “[Do not drink](#)” order for customers in Santa Theresa and Sunland Park from Dec. 1 to Dec. 6, 2023. NMED initiated the investigation into CRRUA after learning from a customer that the system delivered water that had an extremely high pH, an occurrence that is uncommon.

The report identified several key failures by CRRUA management and staff including:

- A pH sensor malfunction and several operational failures by CRRUA staff led to caustic soda being overfed into the treatment process, causing the elevated pH levels within the distribution system.
- CRRUA staff failed to fully investigate complaints from customers that were experiencing “slimy water” as early as Tuesday, November 28, 2023, four days prior to the issuance of the “Do not drink” order.
- CRRUA staff failed to calibrate the pH probes and sensor and observe erratic readings for finished water pH that started as early as November 21, 2023.
- During the investigation, it was established that facilities used to treat for arsenic had been offline periodically over the past year and the system failed to notify customers and NMED.

“The legal and moral obligation of every water utility in New Mexico is to provide drinking water that meets standards to their customers, and that obligation is 24 hours per day, 7 days a week,” said **Water Protection Division Director John Rhoderick**. “CRRUA repeatedly failed to follow basic protocols in water management, implement safeguards to ensure compliance, and inform their customers when they fell short.”

“While many of New Mexico’s water utilities face challenges from lack of staff, funding, and the changing climate, our investigation identified that CRRUA failed at multiple levels and showed a disregard for operating under basic state and federal regulations,” said **Drinking Water Bureau Chief Joe Martinez**. “CRRUA’s customers deserve access to clean, safe water that meets standards and to know when that is not happening.”

DWB [issued seven Notices of Violation \(NOVs\) to CRRUA in 2023](#), including four in December. Of those, only one of the NOVs has been resolved to date. DWB anticipates taking additional enforcement action following the release of this investigation.

CRRUA has received more than \$13.6M in loans and grants for water and wastewater projects from the State since 2012.

NMED's Drinking Water Bureau protects public health by providing regulatory oversight of New Mexico's nearly 1,100 public drinking water systems. DWB oversees public water systems and provides technical, managerial, and financial assistance to ensure protection of public health and safe and sustainable drinking water for New Mexicans. DWB staff will continue working with CRRUA management and staff to get the system into compliance and sustain that status in the future.

View the full CRRUA investigation report [here](#).

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