

**MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM, GOVERNOR**

James C. Kenney, Cabinet Secretary

NEWS RELEASE*For Immediate Release***July 31, 2024**

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.

Contact: Drew Goretzka, Director of Communications
New Mexico Environment Department
505.670.8911 | drew.goretzka@env.nm.gov

Environment Department cracks down on over 100 drinking water systems for jeopardizing the health of their customers

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Tuesday sent 138 letters to drinking water systems across the state, informing their owners of impending civil penalties if they continue to serve consumers unsafe drinking water. The 138 drinking water systems are jeopardizing the health of over 160,000 consumers.

Those who receive a letter must submit a plan to resolve their violation within 15 calendar days or risk a penalty of up to \$1,000 per day afterwards as well as other sanctions by NMED or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

“While a number of government agencies are involved in creating drinking water systems, the Environment Department is responsible for keeping them in line with health-based standards,” Environment Cabinet Secretary James Kenney said. “We are standing on the side of the consumer and will not look the other way when it comes to safe drinking water.”

The drinking water systems who were notified include a number of schools, a Boy Scout camp, and other sensitive populations — like children and seniors. Many of the drinking water systems have been out of compliance for years and even up to a decade. In some of the drinking water served to consumers, contaminants include elevated levels of:

- Arsenic, a poisonous metal that can cause skin changes, liver and kidney damage and birth defects
- Uranium, a radioactive element that can lead to kidney damage and a variety of cancers
- Fluoride, a mineral that can cause diarrhea, bone pain and vomiting in large amounts

“For years, NMED used its limited staff to provide technical and financial assistance to these systems without taking enforcement actions for continued violations.” Compliance and Enforcement Division Director Bruce Baizel said. “While we will continue to assist those systems that face obstacles in providing safe drinking water, consumers deserve robust enforcement too.”

In the last year, approximately 89% of New Mexico's population were served safe and healthy drinking water. However, 41% of drinking water systems did not meet at least one health-based standard during this same timeframe.

If you want to see if your local drinking water system is one of those targeted in this crackdown, NMED developed an interactive map for the public. You can find it by [following this link](#).

###

NMED does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age or sex in the administration of its programs or activities, as required by applicable laws and regulations. NMED is responsible for coordination of compliance efforts and receipt of inquiries concerning non-discrimination requirements implemented by 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 13 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972. If you have any questions about this notice or any of NMED's non-discrimination programs, policies or procedures, you may contact: Kate Cardenas, Non-Discrimination Coordinator | NMED | 1190 St. Francis Dr., Suite N4050 | P.O. Box 5469 | Santa Fe, NM 87502 or (505) 827-2855 or nd.coordinator@env.nm.gov. If you believe that you have been discriminated against with respect to a NMED program or activity, you may contact the Non-Discrimination Coordinator.

###