



NEWS RELEASE

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.

For Immediate Release

May 28, 2025

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

NMED files lawsuit against CRRUA, seeks court-appointed independent manager

Department requests real-time monitoring of arsenic levels in drinking water and free arsenic test strips for customers

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Environment Department today filed a lawsuit in the Third Judicial District Court in Las Cruces, asking the court to appoint an independent manager to oversee the daily operations of the Camino Real Regional Utility Authority, or CRRUA.

If granted, the order would effectively place the troubled water system into a status similar to receivership. The request comes after more than a decade of mismanagement at the utility, most recently demonstrated by repeated failed arsenic tests conducted by both CRRUA staff and NMED compliance and enforcement staff.

In addition to failing to properly treat its drinking water, CRRUA also failed to inform its customers of the dangerous levels of arsenic in their tap water — a violation that has been repeated for years.

“While the Environment Department has invested significant technical resources to assist CRRUA in fulfilling its duty to deliver safe and reliable drinking water, its failures continue to threaten public health,” said **Environment Department Sec. James Kenney**. “Today’s lawsuit and request to appoint an independent manager to oversee CRRUA signals a new approach in Environment Department efforts to protect the health of communities when they turn on their tap.”

NMED is seeking additional relief from the court, ordering CRRUA to:

- Implement real-time arsenic monitoring
- Distribute free arsenic test strips for all CRRUA customers
- Provide an alternative drinking water source if arsenic levels exceed state limits

- Conduct monthly public meetings
- Pay civil penalties which, per state law, fund drinking water and wastewater utility operators for communities across New Mexico

Today's filing aligns with NMED's broader attitude towards water systems that habitually violate state drinking water regulations. In July 2024, NMED [put 138 drinking systems across the state on notice](#), informing their owners that they had 15 days to submit a plan to resolve them.

However, many water systems remain out of compliance — including the City of Las Vegas and Cassandra Water System in Moriarity. If utility management cannot consistently provide safe, reliable drinking water to New Mexicans, the State will not hesitate to have them replaced.

A full copy of the complaint can be [found here](#).

###

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.

###