

Everett statement on Environmental Working Group (EWG)

The City of Everett's water supply is included in data released by the environmental advocacy organization, Environmental Working Group (EWG). Their "tap water database" shows pollutants in drinking water that exceed a public health guideline, as determined by EWG, derived mostly from the State of California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment Public Health Goals. The City of Everett drinking water meets all required federal and Washington state legal standards for regulated contaminants, and EWG confirms this on their site: "...tap water provided by this water utility was in compliance with federal health-based drinking water standards. "

What does the EWG database show?

EWG's database reports that the contaminants Everett detected above EWG's health guidelines were primarily *unregulated* contaminants, elements for which there is no current legal standard. In most cases, City of Everett water tests at or below the public health guideline for the contaminants in EWG's database and in all cases below the EPA regulatory limits.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) gathers information on unregulated contaminants under their Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR) program. The EPA collects data for these chemicals and microbes that may be present in drinking water, but are not currently subject to EPA drinking water regulations. <https://www.epa.gov/dwucmr>

Public water systems report monitoring results to the EPA on an ongoing basis. Consumers should be confident that water scientists regularly monitor the presence of these constituents and continue to investigate the implications of minute levels in the water supply.

What does the EWG database not show?

Everett monitors for regulated and unregulated chemicals/compounds/substances in our drinking water that aren't included in the EWG database. Our [2021 Water Quality Summary](#) contains our complete report with the most recent data. Any results over the EPA's Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) are reported to customers in the annual [water quality report](#).

Does EWG use nationally accepted standards?

No. By their own admission, EWG selectively chooses the guidelines by which they measure water quality. Individual constituents are evaluated on varying standards ranging from federal to assorted state guidelines.

What is the California "public health goal"?

The PHG represents the level of contaminant at which no adverse health effects would be anticipated over an entire lifetime of exposure. So, a PHG is not a boundary line between a "safe" and "dangerous" level of a chemical, and drinking water is frequently demonstrated as safe to drink even if it contains chemicals at levels exceeding their PHGs. The EPA's MCLs are set as close to the health goals as possible, considering cost, benefits and the ability of public water systems to detect and remove contaminants using suitable treatment technologies.

EWG's database shows the City of Everett's water supply has contaminants detected above health guidelines – is this dangerous?

The City of Everett's water supply is safe to drink and meets or surpasses all water quality standards and requirements. There are no industrial or agricultural pollution sources in Everett's drinking water source. Of the constituents listed in the EWG database, some are naturally occurring and some are the result of disinfection processes that eliminate disease-causing pathogens.

How do water systems determine what water quality standards to follow?

All public water systems must adhere to national water quality standards required by the EPA in the Safe Drinking Water Act. Public health guidelines are non-enforceable advisories to water systems that are meant to be weighed in conjunction with economic and technological feasibility. In some cases, the technology to treat the constituents may not be available, or the cost of treatment too high compared to the risk assessment. As technology advances, new and improved treatment options become more available and affordable for adoption by water utilities.