

The latest information about the EMPACT water quality information program

# EMPACT



**EMPACT News** is published by the EMPACT Team led by Tucson Water and provides up-to-date information about water quality in the greater Tucson area. To be added to the mailing list, please call 791-5080, ext. 1372 or email [Dan.Quintanar@tucsonaz.gov](mailto:Dan.Quintanar@tucsonaz.gov).

*Esta información está disponible en español. Por favor llame al 791-5080, ext. 1372.*

For more information about the EMPACT program for Tucson's water quality reporting, visit the Tucson Water web site at [www.cityoftucson.org/water](http://www.cityoftucson.org/water). For more information about the USEPA's EMPACT programs nationwide, visit the EPA website at [www.epa.gov/empact](http://www.epa.gov/empact).

## Conservation Corner

Did you know the average Tucson Water customer uses about 163 gallons of potable water per day? (Potable water is high quality drinking water that's been treated and tested to strict standards, so that it is safe for consumption.) You can reduce that number by simply repairing a leaky faucet in your home or at work. A faucet that drips at a rate of one drop per second wastes 2,700 gallons per year – that's the equivalent of nearly three week's worth of drinking water!

## Tips on Saving Water

## Water Conservation: Protecting a Vital Natural Resource

Water is perhaps Tucson's most precious natural resource. Making sure there's enough to meet our needs – now and in the future – is one of the most important goals we share as a community.

It is estimated that up to 30% of your annual drinking water use is used in the landscape. Landscaping with native or desert-adapted varieties (xeriscape) and capturing and storing rainwater (water harvesting) helps cut down on water use while creating outdoor areas that harmonize with the natural environment, and will help you save money on your monthly water bills. Tucson Water, your local library and plant nursery are great resources for landscaping in the Sonoran Desert. Pima County Cooperative Extension, 626-5161, also offers free gardening materials and landscaping workshops.

Tucson Water's Zanjero program can help you assess your drinking water use at your home with a visit from one of our conservation specialists. They'll check for leaks, measure flow rates of faucets and showers, inspect pools, spas and misting systems, analyze the efficiency of your irrigation system and more. You'll receive a free copy of their report along with helpful suggestions on how to reduce your water

use. Appointments can be made by calling 791-3242.

Tucson Water also has a number of conservation programs in place to support the business community, which uses both drinking and reclaimed water. These programs range from free water use audits for businesses to landscape education through the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension LOW4 Program. Please contact Tracey Berry, our Commercial Conservation Specialist, for more information at 791-5080 ext. 1471.



*Be a super water saver!*

Tucson Water's annual Beat the Peak campaign reminds Tucsonans about wise water use during the hot summer months. This year's theme features Pete the Beak in the role of Aquaduck with his crime-fighting sidekick, Water Lily. Together they battle the water-wasting practices of their foe, the evil Dribbler, and spread the word about conservation.

Watch for the public service announcements on television and remember that this is the time of year to be especially mindful of how you use water. You can find out more about the campaign by visiting the department's web site at [www.ci.tucson.az.us/water](http://www.ci.tucson.az.us/water).

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## Partner in Focus

### Tucson-Pima Public Library



Tucson-Pima Public Library has computers with Internet access at all twenty-two of its branches throughout the Tucson Water service area. Customers can access water quality data from the online EMPACT Water Quality Information and Education program using these facilities. In addition, printed water quality information is available in all of the libraries. Informational displays explaining the EMPACT program - and where you can learn more about the quality of your drinking water - will be located at the Main, Valencia, Wilmot and Woods branches beginning this month.

If you have questions or need additional information, please call the EMPACT Program office at 791-2666.

## Protecting a Vital Natural Resource

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Tucson Water is in the process of developing a Long Range Water Resource Plan that will help determine where our drinking water will come from in the future, how much it might cost, and what its quality will be. The plan emphasizes conservation as an economical and environmentally responsible way to help manage Tucson's growing demand for drinking water. It also addresses our relationship with the Colorado River, which is under great stress from the ongoing drought and increased demand from Arizona and other western states. We'll explore this topic further in the next newsletter.

## Don't Share Your Medication With the Watershed

Medications make their way through our sewer system and wastewater treatment facilities and into our groundwater when they are flushed down sinks or toilets. The wastewater treatment process is not designed to remove medications from the waste stream. Recent studies show that traces of medications make their way through the nation's sewer system and wastewater treatment facilities and are released into our environment.

The treated wastewater is often delivered to parks and golf courses for irrigation. Eventually, these substances migrate down through the earth and show up in our groundwater. The Pima County Department of Environmental Quality operates a household hazardous waste program that is funded by the City of Tucson and Pima County. This program accepts a variety of household hazardous wastes including pesticides, paint products, motor oil and a host of other toxic household products, including medications.

If delivering your pharmaceuticals to the Household Hazardous Waste program is not possible, the Pharmaceutical Research & Manufacturers of America recommends that you discard medications in a way that minimizes the potential for harm to people, pets and the environment.

You can place unused medication in your household trash providing you have made it secure from children and pets by placing the medications in childproof closures and placing it in a sealed opaque bag or container to keep it out of sight. Consider placing these items in the trash just before trash removal.

Please call the Pima County Department of Environmental Quality Household Hazardous Waste Program information line at 888-6947 or at [www.deq.pima.gov](http://www.deq.pima.gov) for more information.

Disposing of your unused medications through the Household Hazardous Waste program or through your household trash helps keep your drinking water and wastewater of high quality for future use.

## Tucson Water Tracks Water Quality

### Lead in Drinking Water

Lead is a common, naturally occurring metal that is used in a number of products and materials. It has many wonderful uses, but it can pose a serious health risk if too much of it enters your body through air or water. Lead can be especially dangerous to young children, whose brains and bodies are still growing.

The EPA estimates that drinking water makes up 20 percent or more of a person's total exposure to lead. The source of this lead isn't the drinking water itself, however. It actually comes from lead pipes and other lead-containing household plumbing parts that come in contact with the drinking water for long periods of time. As these parts age and corrode they release lead into the water that flows through them.

Because lead is an odorless, tasteless substance, you cannot tell if your drinking water contains unsafe levels without having it professionally tested. If your water is found to have lead in excess of 15 ppb (parts per billion), or 0.015 micrograms per liter (ug/L) of water, you should take the following steps to protect your family's health:

- 💧 **Flush your pipes before drinking.** Water that has been sitting in pipes for six hours or more may contain too much lead. Run the tap for several seconds to flush this water from the pipes. You can still be water conscious by using this water to do laundry or water plants.
- 💧 **Only drink cold water.** Use only cold water for drinking, cooking and making baby bottles. Hot water is likely to contain higher levels of lead.

In 2002 the lead levels in Tucson Water's drinking water were around 2.5 ug/L - well below the action level of 15 ug/L. For information about lead in Tucson Water's drinking water, call our Water Quality Management Division at 791-5252. The EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline, 1-800-426-4791, and the National Lead Information Center, 1-800-LEAD-FYI, are additional sources of information about lead in drinking water.

## Q & A

**Customer:** Is CAP water tested for rocket fuel?

**EMPACT Team:** Yes, CAP water, otherwise known as Colorado River water, is tested for the rocket fuel ingredient perchlorate every three months.

Untreated Colorado River water is known to contain small amounts of perchlorate and Tucson Water began testing this water source in 2001.

Since then Tucson Water has occasionally detected perchlorate at very low levels in the untreated Colorado River water but not in our drinking water.

For more information about perchlorate in Tucson Water's drinking water, call our Water Quality Management Division at 791-5252 or visit EPA's web page: [www.epa.gov/safewater/ccl/perchlorate/perchlo](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/ccl/perchlorate/perchlo).



Email your questions about drinking water

quality to Dan Quintanar at [Dan.Quintanar@tucsonaz.gov](mailto:Dan.Quintanar@tucsonaz.gov).