Vallecitos’ water is safe from lead

The news out of Flint, Michigan, about extremely high levels of lead in the drinking water, may raise concerns about whether a similar problem could occur here. Vallecitos Water District customers can be confident that such a scenario is unlikely.

Vallecitos’ water meets, or in most cases, exceeds all state and federal drinking water standards. More than 150 types of tests, conducted by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA), other water agencies, and Vallecitos verify that rating. In other words, your water is constantly monitored and tested from source to tap.

The main risk of lead in drinking water comes from old service lines leading from the water provider’s water main to the individual property. Vallecitos’ water mains are predominantly cement pipe and cement-lined ductile iron pipe. No lead pipes are used in our water mains. There are also very few properties within the Vallecitos service area that have lead used in the plumbing inside the property. Unfortunately, in the Northeast and Midwest there are untold numbers of lead service lines connecting older homes to water mains. If those pipes are exposed to corrosive water, or if water sits too long inside them, the lead could be released and may end up coming out of the tap. This appears to be what happened in Flint.

Vallecitos specifically monitors for lead in drinking water and has done so since 1991 when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations went into effect. Specific homes within Vallecitos’ service area are selected for testing every three years per EPA guidelines. Water samples are collected inside each selected residence at the tap so that the customer’s plumbing is tested along with the service line delivering water to the house. There are no lead service lines within Vallecitos’ service area and Vallecitos has never had a sample with results exceeding the allowable level set by the EPA.

On a national level, there is positive movement in the approach to eliminating lead risks. The U.S. federal regulation that addresses lead in drinking water – the Lead and Copper Rule – is currently under revision. The revised regulation will help those utilities and customers that do have lead in their systems work collaboratively to remove all lead service lines. Vallecitos supports these revisions and others that seek to promote public health.

For more information, go to www.vwd.org/lead. If you have more questions about drinking water in general, call the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791 or go to www.epa.gov/your-drinking-water.
Desalination connection helps region achieve water saving goals

The Vallecitos Water District conservation target was reduced to 16 percent due to the availability of desalinated water.

State regulators have certified the supply of potable water from the Claude “Bud” Lewis Carlsbad Desalination Plant as drought-resilient, reducing the impacts of emergency water-use mandates the state imposed last June.

Certification by the State Water Resources Control Board lowers Vallecitos Water District’s water conservation goal from 24 to 16 percent, a significant reduction from what the State had previously required.

The lowered conservation target means that Vallecitos eased some of its drought restrictions. Customers are now able to power wash structures, deep water trees or transition to drought-tolerant landscapes. The District’s Board of Directors is reviewing drought ordinances to see if any other changes should be made.

“The District has been in a Level 2 Drought Alert condition since August of 2014,” said Vallecitos Board President Mike Sannella. “The efforts by our customers to conserve during the drought, combined with bringing desalination online, are making the difference and will help meet our water supply needs to support the highest quality of life.”

Desalinated water is now a major component of Vallecitos’ water portfolio. It makes up 27 percent of the District’s annual supply and is enough water to meet the needs of more than 8,100 families for one year. Currently, Vallecitos is the only retail water provider that has a direct connection to the desalination plant. For more information, visit www.vwd.org.
Dennis O. Lamb, General Manager of the Vallecitos Water District, will retire in June of 2016, after more than 30 years of service. Lamb began working at Vallecitos in 1982 as a temporary draftsman and months later was hired permanently as an Engineering Technician I. Lamb worked through various engineering positions and was promoted to General Manager on January 5, 2010.

Over the course of his career, Lamb advocated for water supply diversification strategies, like the Carlsbad Desalination Plant. He was also involved in construction of the Twin Oaks Reservoir Tank No. 2, a 40-million gallon underground water storage facility and the redesign of the District’s water reclamation facility. Lamb implemented cost-saving measures which have resulted in Vallecitos’ rates consistently staying below the County average.

He was also heavily involved in water education programs and helped to establish the Water Resources Management and Leadership program at California State University San Marcos.

In 2015, Lamb was named General Manager of the Year by the California Special Districts Association. Lamb was selected for his outstanding experience, effectiveness and leadership of the Vallecitos Water District, as well as his contributions to the water community.

“In my time working with Dennis, it was clear that he brought a passion to Vallecitos that exuded commitment and leadership, which has had a profound impact on the entire water community in our region,” said Vallecitos Board President, Mike Sannella. “On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank General Manager Lamb for his many years of service and dedication to Vallecitos Water District and our customers. His leadership and commitment to excellence will be missed. We wish him the best as he moves on to this next chapter in his life.”

Vallecitos’ General Manager, Dennis O. Lamb, retires

Vallecitos receives two transparency awards from the Special District Leadership Foundation

On April 20, 2016, Vallecitos was honored for achieving both the “District Transparency Certificate of Excellence” and “District of Distinction” accreditation by the Special District Leadership Foundation (SDLF). The SDLF is an independent, non-profit organization formed to promote good governance and best practices among California’s special districts through certification, accreditation and other recognition programs.

Vallecitos received its first “District Transparency Certificate of Excellence” in 2014. The bi-annual accreditation is for sound fiscal management policies and practices in district operations. This recognition is given to organizations for their outstanding efforts to promote a transparent, well governed public agency. Once a district receives this award they are eligible to receive accreditation as a “District of Distinction.”

Vallecitos received its first “District of Distinction” accreditation at an award ceremony in the District’s Board room in April 2016 for completing all the essential governance transparency requirements. This included conducting ethics training for all Board members, properly hosting open and public meetings, filing financial transactions and compensation reports to the State Controller in a timely manner, and posting transparency requirements on the District’s website, which can be found at www.vwd.org/transparency. Vallecitos is one of only 28 special districts, out of over 2,000 within the State of California, to obtain the “District of Distinction” recognition.
Vallecitos Board of Directors votes to change meeting time

Members of Vallecitos’ Board of Directors recently voted to change the time of their public meetings to 5:00 p.m. The Board felt that starting the meetings an hour later would better accommodate work schedules to allow greater participation and more engagement from the community. The Board meets the first and third Wednesday of each month in the District’s Board Room at Vallecitos’ Administration Building, 201 Vallecitos de Oro, in San Marcos. The public is welcome to attend.

Vallecitos also airs all its public meetings on San Marcos TV (SMTV). Residents may tune into SMTV on Cox Communications Channel 19, Time Warner Channel 24 or AT&T U-verse Channel 99 to view the meetings. Visit www.san-marcos.net/smtv for a complete programming schedule. Recorded meetings are also archived on the District’s website at www.vwd.org/boardmeetings.