

# 2015 Drinking Water Quality Report for Nellis Air Force Base

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This report, required by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is distributed by Nellis AFB as our communication to you, the consumer. The drinking water on the installation has been tested and certified as “safe to drink”. The information in this report is a snapshot of calendar year 2015 drinking water quality at Nellis AFB. This effort is accomplished in accordance with the EPA’s Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) which was passed by Congress in 1974. The purpose of the SDWA is to protect public health by regulating the nation’s public drinking water supply. It was amended in 1996 requiring states to develop and implement source water assessment programs for existing and potential threats to the quality of public drinking water. This includes a summary of the assessment in the water system’s annual consumer confidence report (CCR). States are required to delineate the sources of public drinking water, identify potential contamination sources within the delineated area, assess the water system’s susceptibility to contamination and inform the public of the results.

## **Drinking Water Sources**

Most of Nellis AFB’s drinking water comes from Lake Mead and is supplied by the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA). The water in Lake Mead begins as snowmelt in the Rocky Mountains and arrives via the Colorado River. The Las Vegas Wash also carries storm water and treated wastewater into Lake Mead, which accounts for less than 2% of all the water in the lake. The Virgin River and Muddy River also combine to provide approximately 1.5% of the water in Lake Mead. Lastly, the water Nellis AFB receives from SNWA is supplemented by a small percentage of groundwater from wells on and near the installation. The source of this well water originates from the Las Vegas Valley Aquifer.

## **Monitoring and Analysis**

Every month, technicians from SNWA collect and analyze water samples from the Nellis AFB drinking water system and water treatment facilities. The water is tested at a higher frequency and more extensively than the SDWA and the Nevada Administrative Code requires. The test results are shown in the table accompanying this report.

Additionally, Nellis AFB routinely monitors for disinfectant residual in the distribution system. This measurement tells us whether

the installation is effectively disinfecting the water supply. Disinfectant residual is the amount of chlorine present in the water distribution system pipes. If the amount of disinfectant is too low (inadequately treated), disease-causing organisms, including bacteria, viruses, and parasites have the potential of growing within the pipes. These organisms can cause symptoms such as nausea, cramps, diarrhea, and associated headaches. However, these symptoms are not caused solely by organisms in drinking water and can be attributed to other factors (environmental, food based illnesses or person to person interaction).

### **Why are there contaminants in my drinking water?**

Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate the water poses a health risk. In order to ensure tap water is safe to drink, the EPA prescribes regulations to limit the amount of certain contaminants in the water provided by public water systems.

Common sources of drinking water (both tap water and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. Potential sources of contamination for lakes and reservoirs include wildlife and industrial activities (urban chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides). Additionally, landfills, domestic septic systems, and leaking underground storage tanks are all potential sources of contamination for groundwater aquifers. Furthermore, as water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals, in some cases naturally occurring radioactive material, and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or human activity.

More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791 or by visiting [water.epa.gov/drink/hotline/index.cfm](http://water.epa.gov/drink/hotline/index.cfm).

### **Potentially present contaminants in untreated source water include:**

- Microbial contaminants such as viruses and bacteria, which may come from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, and wildlife.
- Inorganic contaminants such as salts and metals, which can be naturally occurring or result from urban storm runoff and industrial or domestic wastewater discharges.
- Pesticides and herbicides which may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban storm water runoff, and residential use.

- Organic chemical contaminants including synthetic or volatile organic chemicals, which are byproducts of industrial processes, as well as, common sources like: gas stations, urban storm water runoff, and septic systems.
- Radioactive contaminants, which can be naturally occurring or the result of industrial activities.
- Your water meets EPA's standard for Lead, but if present at elevated levels, this contaminant can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. Nellis AFB is responsible for providing high quality drinking water, but cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components. When your water has been sitting for several hours, you can minimize the potential for lead exposure by flushing your tap for 30 seconds to 2 minutes before using water for drinking or cooking. If you are concerned about lead in your drinking water, you may wish to have your water tested. Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure is available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline or at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/lead>.

### **Treatment Process**

SNWA has advanced water treatment facilities designed to provide water meeting SDWA standards.

All the water drawn from Lake Mead is sent to the Alfred Merritt Smith or River Mountains water treatment facilities. As it arrives, the water is treated with chlorine and ozone to kill any potentially harmful microscopic organisms. A multistage filtration system is then used to remove particles from the water. As the water leaves the water treatment facility, additional chlorine is added to protect it on the way to the consumer. The water is also treated to prevent corrosion of the pipelines.

In addition to the SNWA supplied surface water, the Nellis AFB public water system consists of nine active wells. Three of the nine wells are located off base and are currently in compliance with the EPA revised arsenic maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 10 ppb. The remaining six active wells are located on Nellis AFB. Four of these wells have arsenic concentrations exceeding the MCL, but are only used for irrigation. The remaining wells are blended with off-base water; this drops the resultant concentration below the EPA standard for arsenic.

The EPA standard balances the current understandings of the possible health effects against the costs of removing arsenic from drinking water. The EPA continues to research the health effects of low levels of arsenic, which is a mineral known to cause cancer in humans at high concentrations and has been linked to other health effects such as skin damage and circulatory problems.

Furthermore, the water from base wells are chlorinated by Civil Engineering (CE) Utilities and then mixed with the SNWA water. CE Utilities maintains a staff of well-trained professionals who operate and maintain the system daily.

### **Do I need to take special precautions?**

No, in most cases; however, some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Some elderly, infants, and Immuno-compromised persons undergoing chemotherapy, who have undergone organ transplants, who have HIV/AIDS, or other immune system disorders can be particularly at risk from infections. These individuals should seek advice about drinking water from a health care provider. EPA and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by Cryptosporidium and other microbial contaminants, are available from the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791 or by visiting the EPA hotline website at [water.epa.gov/drink/hotline/index.cfm](http://water.epa.gov/drink/hotline/index.cfm) .

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Is my tap water safe to drink?**

Yes, your tap water meets and surpasses all SDWA standards and is safe to drink. Also, the Alfred Merritt Smith Water Treatment Facility has been recognized by the National Partnership for Safe Water for its efforts to ensure the Southern Nevada's municipal water meets these water quality standards. Water samples are taken from the NAFB water distribution system monthly and analyzed to ensure compliance with standards. Additionally, in 2013 NDEP conducted a sanitary survey of Nellis AFB and concluded the drinking water system and infrastructure met the state's requirement for a Public Water System to adequately deliver safe drinking water to the consumer, this survey is accomplished every three years.

#### **If tap water is really of good quality, why does it taste the way it does?**

Water quality and taste are not always mutually inclusive. The taste of the water can be caused by chlorine used to keep the water safe from bacteria and naturally occurring minerals. It is important to remember, quality is best measured by the concentration of contaminants in the water. For Nellis AFB, we have very few contaminants in our drinking water and those present are well within SDWA limits.

#### **Do I need to use a water treatment system or drink bottled water?**

No, unless you wish to improve the taste of your water or remove the minerals causing it to be considered "hard". While many people prefer the taste of bottled water, tap water is subject to more stringent quality standards and is monitored and tested more frequently. Additionally, the cost of the average liter of bottled water is more than 1,000 times the same amount of tap water. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) establishes regulations contaminants in bottled water; however, these limits do not always coincide with EPA standards. For more information on bottled water quality, call the International Bottled Water Association at 1-800-WATER11 (1-800-92837-11) or by visiting [www.bottledwater.org](http://www.bottledwater.org).

Pregnant women and people with medical conditions affecting their immune system should consult a physician to determine whether a supplemental treatment system is appropriate. For additional information on home water treatment systems, contact the SNWA at 702-862-3400 or by visiting [www.snwa.com](http://www.snwa.com).

**How will I be notified if a significant health risk associated with my water quality develops?**

This report is considered the appropriate mechanism for notifying the consumer of routine and non-emergency compliance violations. However, certain emergency situations may warrant more active notification efforts, including, but not limited to: additional publications, postings in public places, mass-mailings, or working through other well-established mass-notification systems.

**Why is Creech AFB or the NTTR not listed in the CCR? Is the water tested?**

Since Creech AFB and the NTTR do not provide housing, water quality monitoring and analysis results are not required to be published in a CCR. Nevertheless, the drinking water systems for Creech AFB and the NTTR are monitored monthly by the BEF.

**Additional Information and Input**

If you would like a copy of this report or have questions, please contact the 99 ABW Public Affairs office at 702-652-2750, 99ABW.PA2@us.af.mil. Questions and comments can also be mailed to the 99 ABW Public Affairs office at: 99 ABW/PA, 4430 Grissom Ave, Bldg 11, Ste 107 Nellis AFB, NV 89191. The most current source water assessments are available at the BEF office for the Nellis AFB wells, and through SNWA for the water that is provided by SNWA. If there are any future concerns about the quality of water at Nellis AFB, town hall meetings will be held at the base theater or the community center.

For additional information on the quality of your water, call SNWA at 702-862-3400 or go to the SNWA website at [http://www.snwa.com/wq/water\\_quality.html](http://www.snwa.com/wq/water_quality.html). Information on Nevada's Safe Drinking Water Program is available from the NDEP at 775-687-4670. Or contact the BEF at 702-653-3316 or [99AMDSBio@nellis.af.mil](mailto:99AMDSBio@nellis.af.mil).

General information for drinking water can be found on the EPA website at [www.epa.gov/safewater](http://www.epa.gov/safewater).

**Water Quality Data Tables**

The table associated with this report lists the drinking water contaminants detected. The presence of contaminants in the water does not necessarily indicate the water poses a health risk. Unless otherwise noted, the data presented in the tables are from testing completed in the 2015 calendar year. The EPA and the State requires Nellis AFB to monitor contaminants at a different frequency because some concentrations do not change frequently.

NAFB 2015 CCR TABLE				NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM <sup>(1)</sup>			RESERVOIR #491 <sup>(1)</sup>			RESERVOIR #562 <sup>(1)</sup>			ALFRED MERRITT SMITH WATER TREATMENT FACILITY <sup>(1)</sup>			RIVER MOUNTAINS WATER TREATMENT FACILITY <sup>(1)</sup>			POSSIBLE SOURCES OF CONTAMINATION			
REGULATED CONTAMINANTS	UNIT	MCL (EPA Limit)	MCLG (EPA Goal)	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	AVERAGE	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	AVERAGE	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	AVERAGE	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	AVERAGE	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	AVERAGE				
Alpha Emitters	pCi/L	15	0	Entry Point Monitoring Only				NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NIA <sup>(2)</sup>	NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NIA <sup>(2)</sup>	4.5	6.6	5.7	5.2	5.4	5.3	Erosion of natural deposits of certain minerals that are radioactive and may emit a form of radiation known as alpha radiation		
Arsenic	ppb	10	0					2	3	3 <sup>(3)</sup>	2	3	3 <sup>(3)</sup>	1	2	2	2	2	2	Erosion of natural deposits		
Barium	ppm	2	2					0.1	0.1	NIA	0.1	0.1	NIA	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	Erosion of natural deposits; discharge from metal refineries discharge of drilling wastes		
Beta Particles and Photon Emitters	pCi/L	50 <sup>(4)</sup>	0					NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NIA <sup>(2)</sup>	NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NIA <sup>(2)</sup>	3.5 <sup>(5)</sup>	3.5 <sup>(5)</sup>	3.5 <sup>(5)</sup>	3.2 <sup>(5)</sup>	3.2 <sup>(5)</sup>	3.2 <sup>(5)</sup>	Decay of natural and man-made deposits of certain minerals that are radioactive and may emit a form of radiation known as photons and beta radiation		
Bromate	ppb	10	0					NIA			2	16 <sup>(6)</sup>	8 <sup>(6)</sup>	6	14 <sup>(6)</sup>	9 <sup>(6)</sup>				By-product of drinking-water disinfection with ozone		
Copper <sup>(7)</sup>	ppm	1.3 <sup>(8)</sup> (Action Level)	1.3	0.05	0.55	0.48 (90th% value)	DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM MONITORING ONLY															Corrosion of household plumbing systems; erosion of natural deposits
Cyanide, Free	ppb	200	200	Entry Point Monitoring Only			NID	NID	NIA	NID	NID	NIA	NID <sup>(9)</sup>	6 <sup>(9)</sup>	NID <sup>(9)</sup>	NID <sup>(9)</sup>	NID <sup>(9)</sup>	NID <sup>(9)</sup>	Discharge from steel/metal factories; discharge from plastic and fertilizer factories			
Di(2-ethylhexyl) Adipate	ppb	400	400				NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NIA <sup>(2)</sup>	NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NIA <sup>(2)</sup>	NID	NID	NID	NID	0.2	NID	Discharge from chemical factories			
Fluoride	ppm	4.0	4.0	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.7	NIA	0.5	0.5	NIA	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.7	Erosion of natural deposits; water additive <sup>(10)</sup>			
Free Chlorine Residual	ppm	4.0 <sup>(11)</sup> (MRDL)	4.0 <sup>(11)</sup> (MRDLG)	NID	1.9	0.9 <sup>(11)</sup>	DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM MONITORING ONLY															Water additive used to control microbes
Haloacetic Acids	ppb	60	NIA <sup>(12)</sup>	9	32	28 <sup>(13)</sup>	DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM MONITORING ONLY															By-product of drinking-water disinfection
Lead <sup>(7)</sup>	ppb	15 <sup>(8)</sup> (Action Level)	0	NID	11	2 (90th% value)	DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM MONITORING ONLY															Corrosion of household plumbing systems; erosion of natural deposits
Nitrate (as Nitrogen)	ppm	10	10				0.6	0.6	NIA	0.3	0.3	NIA	0.4	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.7	0.5	Runoff from fertilizer use; leaching from septic tanks, sewage; erosion of natural deposits			
Radium 226 and 228 (combined)	pCi/L	5	0	Entry Point Monitoring Only			NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NIA <sup>(2)</sup>	NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NID <sup>(2)</sup>	NIA <sup>(2)</sup>	NID	0.6	0.2	NID	0.4	0.1	Erosion of natural deposits			
Selenium	ppb	50	50				2	2	NIA	1	1	NIA	2	2	2	2	3	2	Erosion of natural deposits; discharge from mines, component of petroleum			
Thallium	ppb	2	0.5				NID	NID	NIA	NID	NID	NIA	NID	NID	NID	NID	0.3	NID	Leaching from ore-processing sites; discharge from electronics, glass, and drug factories			
Total Trihalomethanes	ppb	60	NIA <sup>(12)</sup>	13	94 <sup>(14)</sup>	68 <sup>(13)</sup>	DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM MONITORING ONLY															By-product of drinking-water disinfection
Turbidity	NTU	95% of the samples < 0.3 NTU <sup>(15)</sup>	NIA	Treatment Facility Monitoring Only									100% of the samples were below 0.3 NTU. The maximum NTU was 0.18 on April 15, 2015.			100% of the samples were below 0.3 NTU. The maximum NTU was 0.13 on April 16, 2015.			Soil runoff			
Uranium	ppb	30	0	Entry Point Monitoring Only			4 <sup>(2)</sup>	4 <sup>(2)</sup>	NIA <sup>(2)</sup>	2 <sup>(2)</sup>	2 <sup>(2)</sup>	NIA <sup>(2)</sup>	4	5	4	4	4	4	Erosion of natural deposits			

Footnotes:  
(1) Some Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) regulations require monitoring from the distribution system, while other SDWA regulations require monitoring at the entry points to the distribution system. (Alfred Merritt Smith WTF, River Mountains WTF, and NAFB Reservoirs)  
(2) Annual monitoring not required, data from 2014.  
(3) This value is the highest running annual average (RAA) reported in 2015. Reports are filed quarterly.  
(4) The actual MCL for beta particles is 4 mrems/year. The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) considers 50 pCi/L to be the level of concern for beta particles.  
(5) Annual monitoring not required, data from 2011.  
(6) Maximum levels greater than the MCL are allowable as long as the running annual average does not exceed the MCL.  
(7) Samples are from the NAFB customers' taps.  
(8) Lead and copper are regulated by a Treatment Technique (TT) that requires systems to control the corrosiveness of their water. If more than 10% of tap-water samples exceed the action level, water systems must take additional steps. For copper the action level is 1.3 ppm, and for lead it is 15 ppb.  
(9) Cyanide was analyzed as total cyanide which includes free cyanide.  
(10) By state law, the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) is required to fluoridate the municipal water supply. This law is not applicable to groundwater.  
(11) Chlorine is regulated by MRDL, with the goal stated as a MRDLG.  
(12) No collective MCLG but there are MCLGs for some of the individual contaminants. Haloacetic Acids: dichloroacetic acid (0), trichloroacetic acid (300 ppb), Trihalomethanes: bromodichloromethane (0), bromoform (0), dibromodichloromethane (60 ppb).  
(13) This value is the highest locational running annual average (LRAA) reported in 2015. Reports are filed quarterly.  
(14) Maximum levels above the MCL are allowable as long as the LRAA does not exceed the MCL. The average of your water meets EPA compliance.  
(15) Turbidity is regulated by a Treatment Technique (TT) requirement - 95% of all samples taken after filtration each month must be less than 0.3 NTU. Maximum turbidity cannot exceed 1.0 NTU.

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**Definitions:**

**Action Level:** The concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements which a water system must follow.

**Disinfection by-product (DBP):** A substance created by the chemicals or processes used to destroy potentially harmful microorganisms.

**Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL):** The highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. MCLs are set as close to the MCLGs as feasible using the best available treatment technology.

**Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG):** The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLGs allow for a margin of safety.

**Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level (MRDL):** The highest level of a disinfectant allowed in drinking water. There is convincing evidence that addition of a disinfectant is necessary for control of microbial contaminants.

**Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level Goal (MRDLG):** The level of a drinking water disinfectant below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MRDLGs do not reflect the benefits of the use of disinfectants to control microbial contamination.

**Treatment Technique (TT):** A required process intended to reduce the level of a contaminant in drinking water.

**Millirem (mrem):** one-thousandth of a rem (roentgen-equivalent-man), which is a unit of absorbed radiation dose that is adjusted for the biological effects equal to one rad of 250 kilovolt roentgen rays (dental roentgen rays require less than 100 kilovolts).

**N/A:** Not applicable

**N/D:** Not detected. Does not equate to zero, but refers to an amount below analytical reporting limits.

**Nephelometric Turbidity Unit (NTU):** A measurement of water's clarity.

**Part per billion (ppb):** A unit used to describe the levels of detected contaminants. Equivalent to 1 cent in \$10 million.

**Part per million (ppm):** A unit used to describe the levels of detected contaminants. Equivalent to 1 cent in \$10,000.

**Picocuries per liter (pCi/L):** A measure of the radioactivity in water. Low levels of radiation occur naturally in many water systems, including the Colorado River.

**Running annual average:** Based on the monitoring requirements, the average of 12 consecutive monthly averages or the average of four consecutive quarters.

**Turbidity:** A measure of water clarity, which serves as an indicator of the treatment facility's performance.