



HAVELOCK NORTH WATER CONTAMINATION

The illness and disruption that has been inflicted on many Havelock North residents by the contamination of the Havelock North water supply has been very serious. The Council is charged with supplying you safe, reliable water. The Council has failed to do this on this occasion. As Mayor and Chief Executive, we offer our sincere apology for this.

Councillors and staff are devastated that hundreds of families in our community have been struck by this debilitating illness. While the cause remains unknown, there is clear evidence that the Havelock drinking water bores have been contaminated resulting in widespread sickness. Council is working as quickly as possible to identify the source of the contamination, however at this stage in our investigations there is no evidence of human or technical failure.

Based on health advice and water industry standards, we know that the combination of the recent chlorination together with boiling drinking water makes the water safe to drink.

WE FEEL IT IS IMPORTANT TO PROVIDE YOU WITH A SUMMARY OF THE ISSUES:

THE CONTAMINANT MAKING PEOPLE SICK

We have been advised that *Campylobacter* is most likely the bug that is causing the illness. The Hawke's Bay District Health Board have issued information on this bug and how to deal with the related illness. This information can be found at <http://www.ourhealthhb.nz/assets/News-and-Event-files/HE1211-Campylobacter-WEB.pdf>

WATER TESTING

Hastings District Council tests all water supplies in the Hastings District in accordance with the New Zealand Drinking Water Standards. This involves testing both the bores and the reticulation pipework routinely. For supplies that are considered secure (e.g. drawing from deep groundwater) such as Havelock, testing generally occurs at least twice a week. Testing is done via an accredited laboratory.

Primary testing is done for *E. coli* as this is an excellent indicator for the presence of harmful bugs. The bugs themselves (such as *Campylobacter*) are difficult to detect and test for. Each test is done in two parts: an initial indication is given within 24 hours as to whether there is a presence indicated, with more detailed testing done if a presence is detected. An initial indication will often turn out as a clear result.

Last week, the Havelock supply was tested on Tuesday 9 August and was found to be clear. A further test was taken on Thursday 11 August (results received on Friday 12 August) which indicated a presence. This result was received at the same time as discussions were beginning with the District Health Board over the patterns of illness that were starting to emerge. The positive presence was confirmed by the more detailed analysis received on Saturday morning. Chlorination had already been initiated late Friday afternoon.

PHYSICS OF THE WATER SUPPLY

Our water comes from aquifers under the ground. The Havelock supply comes from the Te Mata aquifer (which is separate from the Heretaunga Plains aquifer system). The most recent carbon testing shows it to be around 50 years old and free from surface contaminants. The water is pumped from these bores and is untreated except for the addition of fluoride. The Hastings and Havelock North supplies have been separated but do have three connections which can be used in emergency situations. These connections have remained closed prior to and during this week.

Havelock North has three bores at Brookvale. Over the past three years we have had three positive tests for the Brookvale Three bore. The level of contamination was very low, the supply was immediately chlorinated and there appeared to be no health effects. After the last such event this bore was shut down for investigation. This bore remains shut and is not related to this instance of contamination.

HAVELOCK NORTH WATER SUPPLY TESTING AND TREATMENT

Following the initial positive test result on Friday a joint decision was made by the Council and District Health Board to chlorinate the water supply. Because the contaminant was unknown, a further decision was made at 5.30pm advising that people boil their water as a further precaution.

HOW CAN WE STOP THIS HAPPENING AGAIN?

We at Council are doing everything we can to keep you and your families safe. Chlorination of the water supply will continue indefinitely, and we are undertaking a major investigation of the cause of the contamination to help us ensure this cannot happen again. We will communicate with you further about this investigation and will advise the outcomes as soon as these are known.

For those of you that are affected by this illness, please look after yourselves, your families and your neighbours. Keeping you safe from any further outbreak of this type is our utmost priority.

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