



An extensive Public Health Evaluation was performed under the guidance of the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center. The Public Health Evaluation was designed to evaluate the potential short and long-term health risks associated with living in the Naples area as a result of inadequate trash collection, uncontrolled open burning of uncollected trash, and widespread dumping of waste, including chemical and other hazardous waste.

Launched in 2008 and completed in 2011, the Public Health Evaluation involved the collection of air, water, soil and soil gas samples from throughout the Naples area to identify potential health risks.

Your Health: Facts for Navy Families in Naples

About: Bottled Water Safety

The U.S. Navy is committed to ensuring our families are safe while serving our country at home or overseas. The following information is provided as part of a wide-ranging effort to understand the health risks of our personnel and families living in Naples, Italy. From 2008-2011, the Navy conducted a comprehensive Public Health Evaluation to assess potential short and long-term health risks associated with living in the Naples area (see sidebar). In line with our commitment to continually share important health information, we encourage you to review the following information.

What is bottled water?

Bottled water is drinking water sold in sealed containers. Some people prefer bottled water for its taste and odor.

Many people think that bottled water is safer, maybe even healthier, than drinking municipal tap water, but there is no evidence, generally, that supports this as long as the municipal water has been properly treated. In fact, some bottled water is municipal tap water.

Why is the Navy recommending that we use bottled water?

As part of the Naples Public Health Evaluation, the Navy tested tap water samples from homes located off-base to identify whether there are potential health risks. Testing results showed the presence of contaminants such as bacteria and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in some tap water in all areas included in the study.

The levels of VOCs were found to be higher where homes were serviced by private wells, but trace amounts of VOCs were also detected in homes serviced by city water. The detection of VOCs in city water may have been because of illegal connections from private wells to the city water system. These illegal connections allow for contaminated well water to mix with city water, otherwise known as “blending,” and can potentially contaminate the city water system.

As a precautionary measure, the Commander, Navy Region Europe, Africa, Central (CNREURAFCENT) issued

an All Hands Advisory in 2008 to use bottled water for drinking, cooking, food preparation, brushing teeth, making ice, and for pets. The advisory is indefinite (i.e., the Navy has no plans to lift or revise this Advisory), and it applies to all families residing off base where connections to illegal wells, improper maintenance and disinfection of domestic water holding tanks, and the condition of the Italian water infrastructure system could be factors in contamination of the tap water.

How do I know if bottled water is safe to drink?

In the United States, bottled water is regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). By law, FDA standards for bottled water must be as stringent as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s standards for public drinking water. In Italy, the U.S. Army Veterinary Command (VETCOM) is responsible for ensuring bottled water safety for the Department of Defense. It’s important to note that manufacturers of “flavored waters,” where flavor is added to the water, are not required to follow FDA or VETCOM bottled water regulations.

Which brands of bottled water are safe?

All bottled water sold in the Commissary and Navy Exchange (NEX) is safe to drink. U.S. producers of bottled water must meet FDA standards.

As a precautionary measure, the Navy issued an All Hands Advisory in 2008 to use bottled water for drinking, cooking, food preparation, brushing teeth, making ice, and for pets. This Advisory remains in effect.

International producers must be approved by VETCOM, which inspects and approves the San Benedetto water bottle plant that is located in the Veneto region of Italy. The plant is inspected and water is tested for microbiological and chemical compliance. Other brands of bottled water that the Navy knows to be safe include Culligan from the United States and Nestle from Germany.

What about the safety of bottled water sold in town?

European Union and Italian laws regulate bottled water producers. However, due to the number of manufacturers and the fact that the United States does not inspect these facilities or their water sources, the Navy cannot guarantee that the water from these other producers is safe.

How should bottled water be safely stored?

Once a bottle of water is opened, it is best to refrigerate the bottle. This deters bacteria growth and extends its shelf life. Check the “best-before date” on the bottle to determine freshness. Bottled water normally contains low numbers of harmless bacteria; however, if stored for prolonged periods at room temperature, these bacteria can multiply. However, it is more likely that bottled water will become contaminated by the consumer through backwash or handling with unclean hands.

What should I look for when buying bottled water?

- Check that the seal is intact by squeezing to make sure no air or water comes out.
- Check that the water is clear and nothing is floating around.
- Check the manufacturing date and “best-used before” date.
- Check other label information such as chemical analysis (minerals), treatment and water source.

What if I’m dining out and want water?

Ask for a sealed bottle of water and a brand that you may find on base, such as San Benedetto.

Is bottled water in plastic safe?

Recent studies and reports claim that there may be possible health risks from the chemical in polycarbonate plastics known as bisphenol A (BPA). However, these studies are in conflict with other studies that have determined that typical use of polycarbonate plastic bottles does not increase health risks. Until the scientific community reaches agreement on this issue and if you are concerned about the type of plastic used for bottled water, you can identify the plastic used in the manufacturing of the plastic bottle you are drinking from to determine if it is safe. A number inside a triangle of chasing arrows, usually located at the bottom of the container, indicates the type of plastic used.



Polyethylene terephthalate (PET or PETE).

Typically used for bottled water and generally considered safe. These bottles are intended for one-time use; however, the risk of reusing the bottle is greater from exposure to bacteria rather than exposure to chemicals in the plastic.



High density polyethylene (HDPE). Is generally considered safe.



Polyvinyl chloride (PVC). Poses a health risk and should be avoided.



Low density polyethylene (LDPE). Is generally considered safe.



Polypropylene (PP). Is generally considered safe.



Styrene. Poses a health risk and should be avoided.



Polycarbonate plastics, usually containing BPA. If you are concerned about BPA, you should not use these containers.

Is the Navy taking any action to provide safe drinking water?

In 2008, as a means to provide safe drinking water to U.S. military and civilian families living off-base, Naval Support Activity (NSA) Naples obtained emergency funds to purchase bottled water and began distributing the water to off-base housing residents. This free distribution was part of a short-term strategy put into place while Navy leadership explored long-term solutions. The long-term solution in place now is the landlord-provided containerized water program. The landlord-provided containerized water program requires all landlords to provide containerized water (large-sized bottled water) for their U.S. tenants from a Navy-approved vendor. This requirement is included in all new and renegotiated lease agreement language for off-base housing arranged through the NSA Naples Public Housing Office. It is important that US tenants living off base NOT negotiate or agree to have this requirement removed from their lease agreements. Other new lease provisions include requiring landlords to clean and disinfect water holding tanks every six months, and to disconnect all illegal wells and provide proof of connection to the city water system. For more information, contact the NSA Naples Housing Office at 081-811-4466.

What should off-base housing residents do for safe drinking water?

There are a few steps residents can take to reduce or eliminate their exposure to potential contamination.

- Follow the CNREURAFSWA All Hands Bottled Water Advisory for drinking, cooking, food preparation, brushing teeth, making ice, and for pets.
- Continue to stay informed about the Naples Public Health Evaluation through the Naples Community Health Awareness website, Panorama, AFN Radio and Television, All Hands e-mails, and the chain of command.



For more information contact:

U.S. Naval Hospital Naples, Italy, Public Health

DSN: 629-4170
Commercial: 39-081-811-4170

Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center

620 John Paul Jones Circle, Suite 1100 Portsmouth, VA 23708
757-953-0700

Naval Support Activity, Naples

Public Affairs Office
PSC 817 Box 40
FPO AE 09622
DSN: 626-5912
COMM: 39-081-568-5912