

# Spirit Lake Rural Water System

---

## Frequently Asked Questions

Question: Is the water safe to drink?

Answer: Yes. Regular water testing is done to ensure the water meets compliance with all Local, State and Federal laws.

Question: What are the changes recently made to the Spirit Lake Rural Water System?

Answer: The Spirit Lake Nation Water Resource Office, Bureau of Reclamation and Indian Health Service recently constructed a water treatment plant and two new ground water wells.

Question: Why were new wells and a water treatment plant needed?

Answer: The new wells were needed to provide additional water to expand the Spirit Lake Rural water system to serve more tribal residents. The water treatment plant was constructed primarily to comply with new EPA drinking water standards for arsenic.

For the past twenty years the Tribe has been served by three wells whose raw water was disinfected and supplied via the existing distribution system. Construction of several pipeline projects has connected many residents of the reservation to the system and additional water was needed. Also, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lowered the Maximum Contaminate Level (MCL) for arsenic from 50 parts per billion to 10 parts per billion for better public protection.

Question: Why is there arsenic in the water?

Answer: Some of the water system's wells draw ground water that contains naturally occurring arsenic at levels which average slightly above EPA's new limit. The new water treatment plant removes arsenic and other constituents. Arsenic occurs naturally in rocks and soil, water, air, and plants and animals. It can be further released into the environment through natural activities such as volcanic action, erosion of rocks, and forest fires, or through human actions. Studies have linked long-term exposure to elevated levels of arsenic (greater than 250 parts per billion) in drinking water to cancer of the bladder, lungs, skin, kidney, nasal passages, liver, and prostate, as well as non-cancer effects to cardiovascular, pulmonary, immunological, neurological and endocrine (i.e. diabetes) systems.

Question: What are some problems that can occur during this change?

Answer: Changes in the appearance, color, odor or taste can occur when water treatment processes and water supplies are changed. Recently water users have expressed concern about the appearance (aesthetics) of their water and although there is no risk to human health and the problem occurs infrequently, treatment adjustments are being made to reduce/lessen the occurrence of this problem.

The water quality entering the system is different than the previous water. It is likely that some of the mineral deposits within the system will be dissolved and could have an impact on the water aesthetics at the tap. As more water is produced from the new water treatment plant, the impact on the water quality at the tap will lessen over time.

Question: What additional steps are being taken to keep the water safe to drink?

Answer: Currently the operational staff has been adjusting the new treatment process to maximize the arsenic, iron and manganese removal efficiency of the five wells and are doing additional flushing. The water system has consistently maintained compliance with all Local, State and Federal laws.

If you have additional questions or concerns, please call the Water Resources office at 701-766-1209.