

THE
EMBARCADERO
CONDOMINIUM

DATE: Wednesday, April 17, 2024

TO: All Owners

FROM: Embarcadero Condominium Association

RE: Sun Sentinel article – Broward County water quality and possible rate hike to pay for improvements may possibly be passed to the consumer.

SOUTH FLORIDA
SunSentinel

‘Double or triple water rates’: Broward warns of increased fees to comply with new testing rules



By **LISA J. HURIASH** | lhuriash@sunsentinel.com | South Florida Sun Sentinel

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Water could become a whole lot more expensive – but safer – to drink for many residents.

Last fall, Broward County hired a consultant to see what changes it can make to the water-treatment process to cut down on the volume of toxic chemicals known as PFAS in the drinking water. Toxic PFAS, or perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, can be widespread and long lasting in the environment.

That county report, likely to be finished within a “couple months,” is expected to show a “hefty dollar amount” to replace the water plants, said County Administrator [Monica Cepero](#). That could cost customers who get their water from Broward County about \$500 million initially, with another extra \$135 million to \$140 million each year to operate and maintain the new plants, which will require more electricity and filtration.

The county won’t foot the bill, rather it could turn into “double or triple water rates for users,” said Commissioner Steve Geller.

Broward County has about 60,000 water accounts, amounting to about 250,000 people who benefit from its water service.

Broward has 31 cities and 25 water providers, so some cities get their water from elsewhere. Of those 25 water providers, Broward County owns and operates two water plants.

Current levels in Broward County's drinking water are considered fine for now, according to a study last summer of its two plants.

But last week, the federal government finalized strict limits on certain so-called "forever chemicals" in drinking water that will require utilities to reduce them to the lowest level the chemicals can be reliably measured. Officials say this will reduce exposure for 100 million people and help prevent thousands of illnesses, including cancers. The rule is the first national drinking water limit on PFAS, which can be hazardous because they don't degrade in the environment and are linked to health issues such as low birth weight and kidney cancer.

According to the new federal rules, water providers will generally have three years to do testing. If those tests exceed new limits, they'll have two more years to install treatment systems, according to Environmental Protection Agency officials.

Broward County Commissioner Mark Bogen has championed treating the drinking water supply from the chemicals and said that Broward shouldn't wait.

"I don't think it's acceptable to wait five years, the public should have clean water and safe water," he told county commissioners Tuesday. "We should make this a priority to get this done within a year or two."

Cepero warned the cost to pay for the improvements would be a "heavy lift and heavy burden on those receiving the water." Construction on the new plants could take two years, she said.

Meanwhile, Broward's cities also are identifying how to comply with the new rules and how much it will cost. North Lauderdale, for example, be tackling the topic within the next few months, said City Manager Mike Sargis.

And Pompano Beach is "conducting research to determine the best course of technology for removal" of the chemicals, said city spokeswoman Sandra King.

She said they are planning an expansion of the water treatment plant for the removal of the chemicals and the request for the design of the new facility is expected by this summer. The city is also applying for grants to help cover the cost, and has received \$9.56 million for the research and design of the new treatment plant so far.

Information from The Associated Press was used to supplement this news article.

Lisa J. Huriash can be reached at lhuriash@sunsentinel.com. Follow on X, formerly Twitter, @LisaHuriash