



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: December 17, 2021

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Hawai'i DOH, Navy, Army, and EPA establish Interagency Drinking Water System Team, sign water sampling plan

Partnership ensures agencies work together to restore access to safe drinking water

HONOLULU – Today, the Hawai'i Department of Health (HDOH), the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Army and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established an Interagency Drinking Water System (IDWS) Team to restore safe drinking water to affected Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH) housing communities. The working group will ensure that the agencies are coordinated in actions to restore safe drinking water to Navy water system users and that they have a clear, coordinated source of information as work continues to restore safe drinking water. Earlier this week the IDWS Team's first work product, the Drinking Water Sampling Plan, was signed.

"The Hawai'i Department of Health continues to work toward the restoration of safe and reliable drinking water to Navy water system users in a manner that safeguards our precious natural resources and all O'ahu residents," **said Hawai'i State Deputy Director of Environmental Health, Kathleen Ho**. "The Interagency Drinking Water System Team sets out a framework to ensure that actions are protective of public health and the environment."

"EPA is committed to ensuring tap water delivered to Navy water system users meets all State of Hawai'i and Federal drinking water requirements," **said Acting EPA Pacific Southwest Regional Administrator, Deborah Jordan**. "This sampling plan cements all agencies' agreement that the highest standards of sampling thresholds will be met before restrictions are lifted."

"The Navy is working closely with the Department of Health and the EPA to quickly and safely restore safe drinking water to our residents," **said Rear Adm. Blake Converse, Deputy Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet**. "This interagency drinking water system team will ensure we stay tightly aligned as we step through the recovery process together."

The goals of the new IDWS Team are to:

- Protect public health, safety, and the environment.
- Ensure access to safe drinking water.
- Conduct sampling and testing of groundwater and drinking water consistent to a jointly agreed upon Sampling and Analysis Plan.
- Monitor and address community concerns at impacted residences.
- Implement flushing activities after a jointly agreed upon Flushing Plan.

“The EPA has the scientists and experts we need to better understand the extent of the contamination and how to address it,” **said U.S. Senator Brian Schatz, who met with EPA officials over the weekend and has called for the federal agency to take a more active role.**

“This is an urgent crisis that requires cooperation and the full weight of the federal government. I will continue to work closely with the EPA, state, county, and military leaders, and my colleagues in Congress to make sure we have the resources we need to address this crisis.”

“As multiple agencies continue to respond to this crisis, the need for coordination and clear and accurate communication to the public is critically important,” **said U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono.**

“I appreciate the Navy, Army, EPA, and HDOH entering into an interagency agreement to work together effectively towards a shared goal of getting safe drinking water to families in Oahu. I look forward to learning more about their plans and progress to achieving this shared mission.”

“It remains critical that all key stakeholders operate as a unified team with full transparency and cooperation all around,” **said Congressman Ed Case (HI-01).** “This plan is a critical part of that effort.”

“There is no higher priority than the health and safety of our communities. The newly established partnership of the Interagency Drinking Water System Team requires the full collaboration and coordination of everyone involved,” **said U.S. Representative Kai Kahele.**

“I will continue to work alongside our Hawai‘i congressional delegation, the Hawai‘i Department of Health, the EPA, Navy, and Army to ensure the island of O‘ahu has safe drinking water for the short and long-term.”

JBPHH Drinking Water Sampling Plan

One of the first actions of the IDWS Team was to develop and sign a Sampling Plan that meets State of Hawai‘i and EPA drinking water standards. The IDWS Team is focused on restoring safe water to impacted areas.

The sampling plan outlines steps to ensure that the data collected is used as one of the multiple lines of evidence needed to understand when it is appropriate to return residents to their homes. This plan allows for flexibility to update and revise the document as data and other information demonstrate that it should be adjusted, to protect human health. Steps include:

- Collecting shaft water samples from the Waiawa Shaft, Halawa Shaft, and Red Hill Shaft to define contamination in the source water.
- Identifying contaminated locations to prioritize flushing in the Department of Defense Water System.
- Following approval of a flushing plan, collecting water samples from locations where flushing has been *tentatively* completed for confirmation of successful flushing.
- Collecting drinking water samples from randomly selected taps of homes/buildings.
- Collecting and analyzing drinking water results at various intervals throughout the two-year period after residents have returned home.

The IDWS team is only one facet of this response. The U.S. Navy and the U.S. Army continue to provide temporary housing to impacted residents, and all agencies continue to weigh any long-term impacts to drinking water resources.

“The signing of this plan marks a major milestone as we strive to address the water challenges we face in partnership with the Hawai’i Department of Health, EPA and Navy,” **said Craig Deatrick, director of U.S. Army Installation Management Command-Pacific.**

The Honorable Meredith Berger, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations, and Environment, and performing the duties of the Under Secretary of the Navy, is leading a [Federal Interagency Working Group](#) in response to the incident at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility. Representatives from state, local, and Native Hawai’ian organizations were invited to exchange views and information. The IDWS Team is a result of this partnership, where subject matter experts across the whole of government are identifying methods to restore clean water to affected communities.

In late November, hundreds of families living on JBPHH and Army housing areas of Aliamanu Military Reservation and Red Hill reported petroleum smells coming from their residential tap water and resulting health impacts. Approximately 93,000 Navy water system users are impacted, including approximately 3,200 people who remain in temporary housing due to the drinking water crisis. The IDWS Team will work cooperatively to protect public health, safety and the environment and restore drinking water to impacted residents.

Learn more about associated response actions by visiting the HDOH, Navy, and Army websites:

Hawai’i DOH: <https://health.hawaii.gov/about/navy-water-system-quality-updates>.

U.S. Navy: <https://www.cpf.navy.mil/JBPHH-Water-Updates>.

U.S. Army: <https://home.army.mil/hawaii/index.php/water>