

2011  
Drinking  
Water  
Report

**LESS** IS THE **NEW** **MORE**



Go to [LessIsMoreEP.org](http://LessIsMoreEP.org) to download a coupon for a FREE low-flow showerhead.

# Dear Customer:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requires all utilities to prepare and distribute this report on an annual basis. It is part of the provisions of the Safe Drinking Water Act. The information is also submitted to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the state agency that monitors our compliance with the regulatory standards and testing requirements necessary to assure safe drinking water.

El Paso's drinking water has no water quality violations according to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality regulations.

The drought on the Rio Grande continues. We have only had 3 years out of the past 16 where flow into the upstream reservoirs has been greater than the long-term average. Conservation of water, especially this summer, is critical. For more information about the drought and conservation, visit [LessIsMoreEP.org](http://LessIsMoreEP.org)

On behalf of my governing board, the Public Service Board, please be assured that we will continue to work hard for you, our customer, to make certain that we consistently exceed your water supply, water quality and customer service expectations at a reasonable price.

Sincerely,

Edmund G. Archuleta, P.E., President / Chief Executive Officer

## Find us on:

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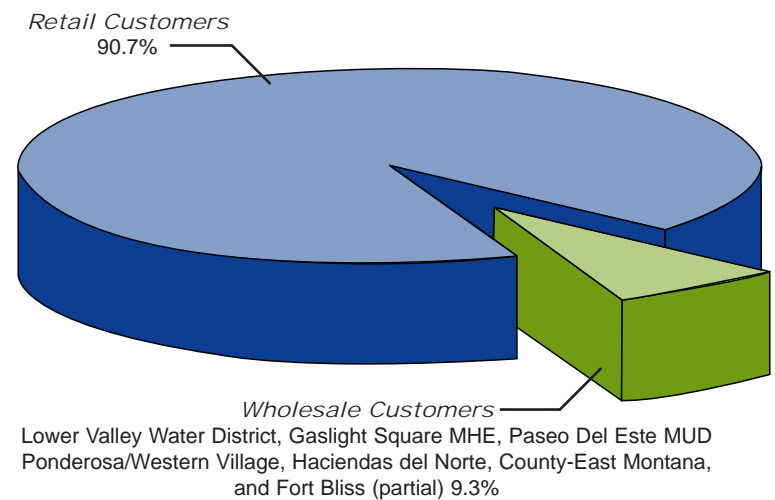
[YouTube.com/EPWU](https://www.youtube.com/EPWU)



## Who Drinks Our Water?

El Paso Water Utilities serves customers inside and outside the city limits. We provide retail water service to customers in the City of El Paso, Westway, Canutillo, and Homestead. We also provide wholesale service to several communities in El Paso County.

### 2011 Retail and Wholesale Customers



## Source Water Assessment

A source water assessment was conducted for El Paso Water Utilities in 2003 by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Due to the complicated nature of El Paso's groundwater supplies, some susceptibilities exist, but the depth of the groundwater is a mitigating factor. Since the surface water supply comes from upstream states and since a variety of agricultural and municipal dischargers use the Rio Grande, the surface water supply is uniquely susceptible. However, El Paso's surface water treatment plants are designed to minimize the effects of those susceptibilities.

*Note to wholesale customers: Water consumers in the Lower Valley Water District, Paseo Del Este MUD, Ponderosa/Western Village, Gaslight Square MHE, County-East Montana and Haciendas del Norte receive water from the EPWU distribution system. As such, their water quality is the same as described in this report. Fort Bliss water consumers may receive some or all of their water from the EPWU distribution system, but may receive water from other sources that may not be represented in this report. Please contact your water retailer for further information.*

## For More Information

El Paso Water Utilities is governed by the Public Service Board. The Board meets at 9:00 a.m. on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at El Paso Water Utilities' main office, 1154 Hawkins Boulevard. The meetings are open to the public. Please call 594-5680 to confirm the meeting date and time.

Questions about public participation and policy decisions can be directed to our Communications Department at 594-5692.

**Other useful numbers are:**

Water Quality Laboratory 594-5733

Safe Drinking Water Hotline 1-800-426-4791

**Visit our web site:** [www.epwu.org](http://www.epwu.org)

*Notice: This Water Quality Report is being provided in addition to other notices that may be required by law.*



# What is in Our Water?

All drinking water contains some naturally-occurring contaminants. The sources of both tap water and bottled water include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally-occurring minerals and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activity.

## Contaminants that may be present in source water include:

- *Microbial contaminants*, such as viruses and bacteria, which may come from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural live-stock operations, and wildlife.
- *Inorganic contaminants*, such as salts and metals, which can be naturally-occurring or result from urban stormwater runoff, industrial or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming.
- *Pesticides and herbicides*, which may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban stormwater runoff, and residential uses.
- *Organic chemical contaminants*, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals, which are by-products of industrial processes and petroleum production, and can also come from gas stations, urban stormwater runoff, and septic systems.
- *Radioactive contaminants*, which can be naturally occurring or be the result of oil and gas production and mining activities.

In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) prescribes regulations that limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. The Food and Drug Administration regula-

tions establish limits for contaminants in bottled water. Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk. In fact, a few of the naturally occurring substances may have nutritional values at low levels. Contaminants might be found in drinking water that can cause taste, color, or odor problems. These types of problems are not necessarily causes for health concerns. For more information on the taste, odor, or color of drinking water, please call 594-5733.

More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the Environmental Protection Agency's Safe Drinking Water Hotline (1-800-426-4791).

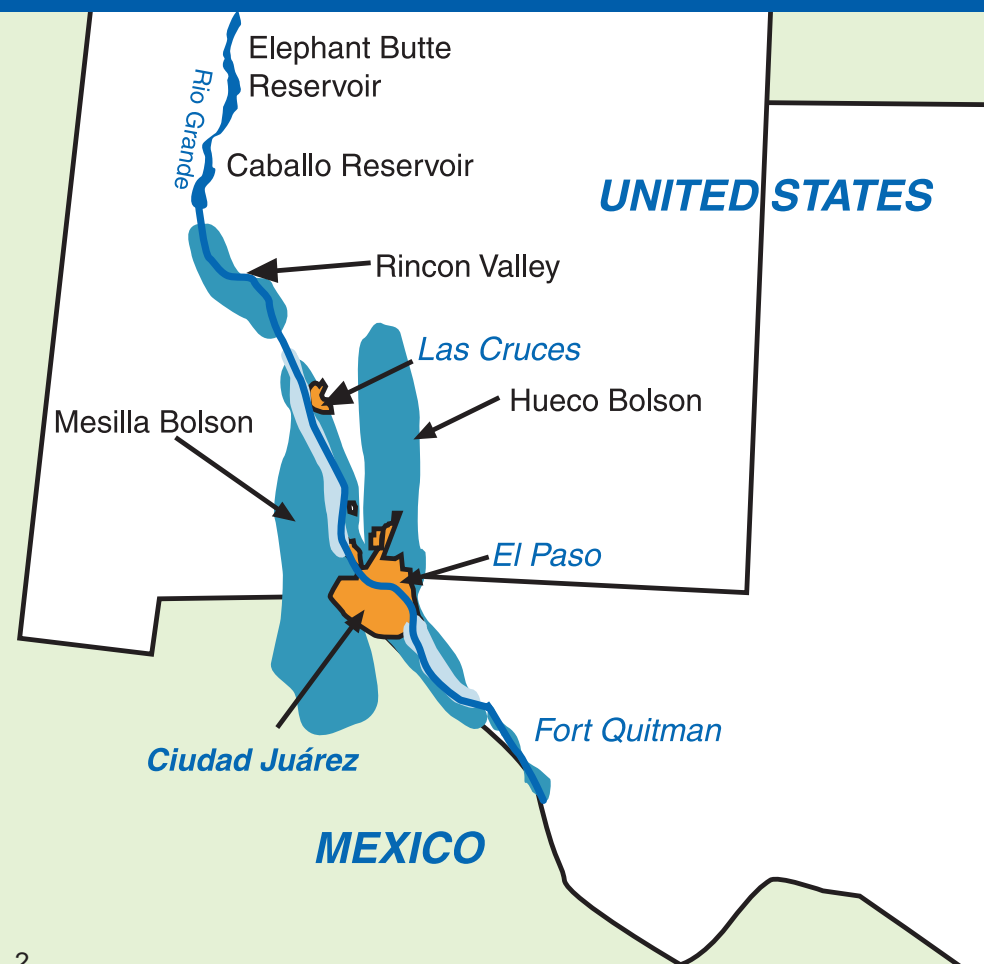
## Required Additional Health Information

You may be more vulnerable than the general population to certain microbial contaminants, such as *Cryptosporidium*, in drinking water. Infants; some elderly or immuno-compromised persons such as those undergoing chemotherapy for cancer; those who have undergone organ transplants; those who are undergoing treatment with steroids; and people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders can be particularly at risk from infections. You should seek advice about drinking water from your physician or health care provider. Additional guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by *Cryptosporidium* are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline (1-800-426-4791).

## Where Our Water Comes From

The water we supply to our customers comes from three sources—one surface water source and two groundwater sources. The surface water source is the Rio Grande. The groundwater sources are the Mesilla Bolson and the Hueco Bolson aquifers. Although some customers receive water from only one source, most customers receive water from two sources, depending on the time of year.

Our treatment plants are designed and operated to treat water to a level of safety far exceeding that required by EPA regulation. El Paso Water Utilities consistently treats surface water to 0.1 NTUs measured immediately after the water has passed through each filter. This is significantly better than the 0.3 NTUs required by EPA regulation.





# Dealing with Drought

Water conservation is important in arid cities such as El Paso. We have finite water resources, and reducing our water use helps stretch water supplies.

El Paso typically draws 50 percent of its municipal water supply from the Rio Grande. The rest comes from the Hueco and Mesilla Bolsons, two underground aquifers that stretch into New Mexico and Mexico.

Less river water will pass through El Paso this year due to low water levels in upstream reservoirs and extreme drought conditions in the Rio Grande watershed. We received river water in April, but very little in May. We expect continuous releases from June

through mid-August when we anticipate that the reservoir gates will close for the year. What's more conditions might not return to normal for several years.

Conservation stretches our water supply and reduces high peak demand. So while we always encourage conservation, it's especially important now.

You might not be wasting water, but you might be using more than you realize and more than you need. Be aware of your daily habits and look for ways to conserve, because the less you use today, the more we'll have for tomorrow.

## Water Conservation Programs

### Tech<sub>2</sub>O Water Resources Learning Center

Learn about water conservation by exploring interactive displays, exhibits and demonstration projects at the Tech<sub>2</sub>O Center. The Center also offers classes and workshops throughout the year. Check the back of your EPWU bill for a list of upcoming events.

Located at 10751 Montana Ave., the Tech<sub>2</sub>O Center is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday. For information: 621-2000.



### Less is the New More

Visit [LessIsMoreEP.org](http://LessIsMoreEP.org) for conservation tips, how-to videos and a list of water-smart plants.

## Indoor Conservation Tips



Repair drips and leaks quickly.



Wash full loads of laundry and dishes, and look for water-efficient appliances and plumbing fixtures when replacing older models.



Install a thermostat so evaporative coolers run only when they need to, or recycle the water with a recirculating pump.



In the bathroom, turn off the water while brushing your teeth or shaving. Take shorter showers and use a low-flow showerhead.



Repair running toilets and replace loose flappers.

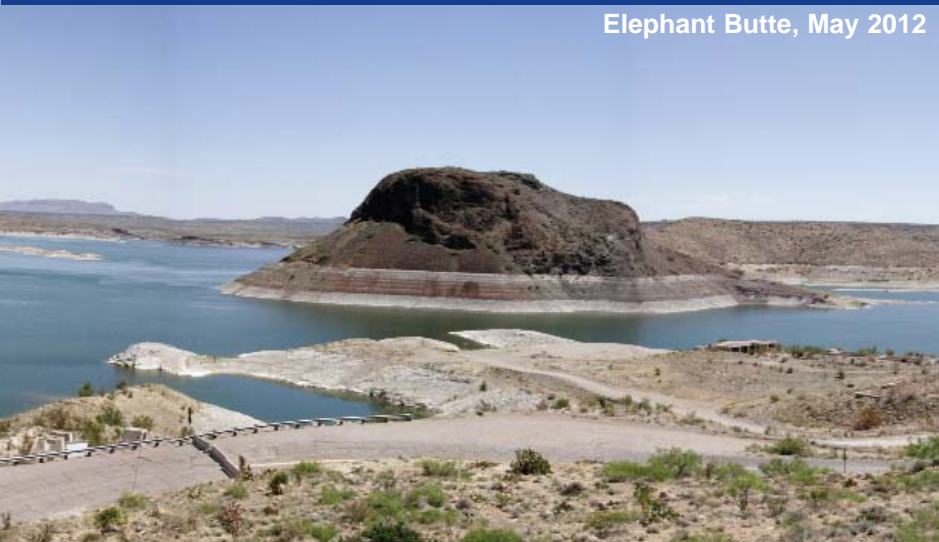
### When Can I Water?

EVEN Address: Tues., Thurs. or Sat.

ODD Address: Wed., Fri. or Sun.

April 1 - September 30:  
water before 10am or after 6pm





## Outdoor Conservation Tips



Water the lawn only when necessary. Once or twice a week might be all you need for an established lawn.

Water early in the morning or late in the evening when cooler temperatures minimize evaporation.

Turn off the sprinkler on windy or rainy days.

Adjust the sprinkler so it waters the lawn, but not the street, sidewalk or driveway.



Water at designated times on your watering day.



Repair leaking faucets and broken sprinklers.



Plant warm season grasses such as Bermuda or Zoysia, but not on narrow or sloped areas that are difficult to water.



Use a bucket or a hose with a shut-off nozzle when washing vehicles.



Use a broom, not a hose, to clean sidewalks, driveways and patios.

The following information pertains to the table on the next page.

### HEALTH EFFECTS LANGUAGE

**Turbidity (NTU)** - Turbidity has no health effects. However, turbidity is monitored because it can interfere with disinfection and provide a medium for microbial growth.

**Arsenic (ppb)** - While your drinking water meets EPA's standard for arsenic, it does contain low levels of arsenic. EPA's standard balances the current understanding of arsenic's possible health effects against the costs of removing arsenic from drinking water. EPA continues to research the health effects of low levels of arsenic, which is an element known to cause cancer in humans at high concentrations and is linked to other health effects such as skin damage and circulatory problems.

### DEFINITIONS

**Action Level** - The concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements that a water system must follow.

**Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL)** - The highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. MCLs are set as close to maximum contaminant level goals as feasible using the best available treatment technology.

**Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG)** - The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLGs allow for a margin of safety.

**N/A** - not applicable

**Nephelometric Turbidity Unit (NTU)** - A measure of turbidity (*cloudiness*).

**Parts per Billion (ppb)** - or micrograms per liter. An example of one part per billion is one packet of artificial sweetener sprinkled into an Olympic-sized swimming pool full of water.

**Parts per Million (ppm)** - or milligrams per liter. An example of one part per million is one packet of artificial sweetener sprinkled into 250 gallons of water.

**Picocuries per liter (pCi/L)** - A measure of radioactivity.

**Treatment Technique** - A required process intended to reduce the level of a contaminant in drinking water.



# DRINKING WATER ANALYSIS

Substance (Units)	Sample Year <sup>(7)</sup>	Average Level	Minimum Level	Maximum Level	MCL	MCLG	Possible Source
<b>Turbidity</b> Turbidity (NTU)	2011	N/A	100% <sup>(1)</sup>	0.16	Treatment Technique	N/A	Soil runoff
<b>Inorganics</b> Arsenic (ppb)	2011	7.10	0.8	17.3 <sup>(10)</sup>	10	0	Erosion of natural deposits
Barium (ppm)	2011	0.09	0.05	0.14	2	2	Erosion of natural deposits
Chromium (ppb)	2011	1.60	0	10.40	100	100	Erosion of natural deposits
Fluoride (ppm)	2011	0.72	0.49	1.19	4	4	Erosion of natural deposits
Nitrate as Nitrogen (ppm)	2011	0.91	0	4.59	10	10	Runoff from fertilizer use
Gross Alpha (pCi/L)	2011	4.7	0	13.6	15	0	Erosion of natural deposits
Gross Beta (pCi/L)	2011	7.9	0	15	50	0	Decay of natural and man-made deposits
Radium Total (pCi/L)	2011	0.24	0	2.2	5	0	Erosion of natural deposits
Selenium (ppb)	2011	3.70	0	23.8	50	50	Erosion of natural deposits
Thallium (ppb)	2011	0.05	0	0.5	2	0.5	Leaching from ore-processing sites
<b>Lead and Copper</b> Copper (ppm)	2009	0.5 <sup>(2)</sup>	0.037	1.1	Action Level = 1.3	1.3	Corrosion of household plumbing systems
Lead (ppb)	2009	5.4 <sup>(2)</sup>	0.27	38 <sup>(11)</sup>	Action Level = 15	0	Corrosion of household plumbing systems
<b>Coliform Bacteria</b> Total Coliform Bacteria	2011	N/A	0%	0.8%	5%	0	Naturally present in the environment
<b>Disinfection Residual</b> Chlorine (ppm)	2011	N/A <sup>(6)</sup>	N/A <sup>(6)</sup>	2.3	4 <sup>(8)</sup>	4 <sup>(9)</sup>	Water additive used to control microbes
Chlorine Dioxide (ppb)	2011	N/A <sup>(6)</sup>	N/A <sup>(6)</sup>	590	800 <sup>(8)</sup>	800 <sup>(9)</sup>	Water additive used to control microbes
<b>Disinfection Byproducts</b> Total Trihalomethanes (TTHM) (ppb)	2011	29.3 <sup>(3)</sup>	0	71.2	80	N/A	By-product of drinking water disinfection
Total Haloacetic Acids (THAA) (ppb)	2011	5.6 <sup>(3)</sup>	0	17.2	60	N/A	By-product of drinking water disinfection
Bromate (ppb)	2011	N/A <sup>(6)</sup>	N/A <sup>(6)</sup>	5.0	10	0	By-product of drinking water disinfection
Chlorite (ppm)	2011	N/A <sup>(6)</sup>	N/A <sup>(6)</sup>	0.659	1	0.8	By-product of drinking water disinfection
<b>Total Organic Carbon</b> Removal Ratio	2011	N/A	1.7	1.75	Treatment Technique <sup>(4)</sup>	N/A	Naturally present in the environment
<b>Unregulated Contaminants<sup>(5)</sup></b> Chloroform (ppb)	2011	3.1	0	14.7	N/A	70	By-product of drinking water disinfection
Bromoform (ppb)	2011	4.5	0	16.9	N/A	0	By-product of drinking water disinfection
Bromodichloromethane (ppb)	2011	5.6	0	21.7	N/A	0	By-product of drinking water disinfection
Dibromochloromethane (ppb)	2011	8.2	0	27.3	N/A	60	By-product of drinking water disinfection
<b>Volatile Organic Compounds</b> Ethylbenzene (ppb)	2011	0.03	0	0.56	700	700	Discharge from petroleum refineries
Total Xylenes (ppm)	2011	0.22	0	3.2	10	10	Discharge from petroleum and chemical factories

<sup>(1)</sup>The lowest monthly percentage of samples meeting limits was 100%.

<sup>(2)</sup>Lead and copper concentration shown are at the 90th percentile level at the customer's tap first draw sample.

<sup>(3)</sup>The highest running annual average at any location monitored was 46.1 ppb for TTHM and 11.1 ppb for THAA.

<sup>(4)</sup>The system is in compliance with a yearly removal ratio of 1.00 or greater.

<sup>(5)</sup>Unregulated contaminants are those for which EPA has not established drinking water standards. The purpose of unregulated contaminant monitoring is to assist EPA in determining the occurrence of unregulated contaminants in drinking water and whether future regulation is warranted.

<sup>(6)</sup>The average and minimum disinfection residuals are dependent on treatment techniques.

<sup>(7)</sup>Data presented prior to 2011 is from the most recent testing done in accordance with the regulations.

<sup>(8)</sup>Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level (MRDL) - The highest level of a disinfectant allowed in drinking water. There is convincing evidence that addition of a disinfectant is necessary for control of microbial contaminants.

<sup>(9)</sup>Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level Goal (MRDLG) - The level of a drinking water disinfectant below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MRDLGs do not reflect the benefits of the use of disinfectants to control microbial contaminants.

<sup>(10)</sup>This sample result for one well was collected during a period of experimentation on the arsenic treatment system.

<sup>(11)</sup>Only one sample exceeded the lead action level of 15 ppb.



El Paso Water Utilities  
1154 Hawkins Blvd.  
P.O. Box 511  
El Paso, Texas 79961-0511

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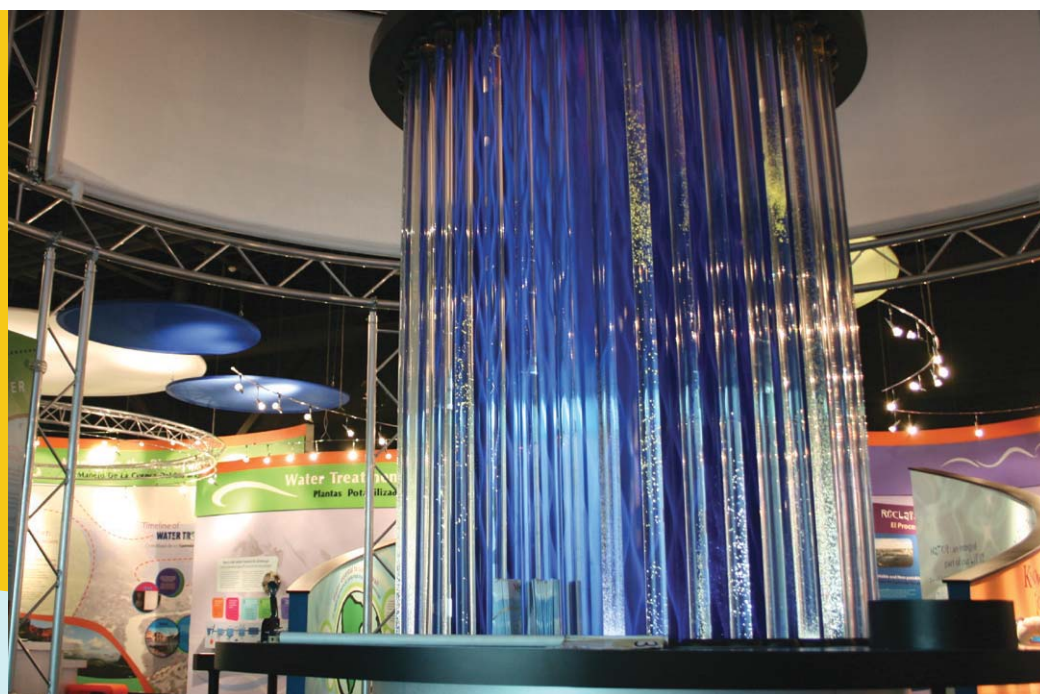
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*2011 Drinking Water Report*

*La versión en español de éste folleto se encuentra adentro.*