



bottled water facts



October 2007

Permanent Phase-Out of Bottled Water Purchases: Facts for City and County of San Francisco Employees

For more than a decade, bottled water companies have spent millions to peddle the myth that bottled water is safer, cleaner, better-tasting and even more glamorous than tap water. The result is record spending on bottled water by consumers and local governments at the expense of the environment.



Snow melts into the Tuolumne river to fill Hetch Hetchy Reservoir with pristine water.

But San Francisco's tap water – pristine snowmelt from the Sierra Nevada mountains and the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir – is already some of the purest, safest and best tasting water in the world. San Francisco is also proud of its historic role as a leader in environmental protection, and it is critical that we continue to initiate new policies that further protect our natural resources and combat global climate change.

In June 2007, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom issued an Executive Directive prohibiting any City department or agency from purchasing bottled water using City funds.

What does this mean for City employees?

City departments are no longer permitted to purchase single-serving bottles of water, unless an employee contract specifies usage.

By December 1, 2007, all City departments and agencies occupying either City or rental properties will remove City-funded bottled water dispensers and where possible install bottle-less water dispensers that utilize Hetch Hetchy tap water. Contact your appointed department representative for more information on determining bottle-less water dispenser locations in your department.

All City employees are responsible for meeting the mandates of the Executive Directive. Bottled water may not be purchased for business meetings and events coordinated using City department funds. Please contact your supervisor to make

special arrangements to serve water to members of the public or event participants.

San Francisco tap water is a safe, healthy choice.

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's (SFPUC) regional water system collects granite-filtered spring snowmelt from the Sierra Nevada at the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir for delivery to San Francisco and Bay Area taps.

Water collected at the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir exceeds all federal and state criteria for water quality and San Francisco's tap water is tested nearly 90,000 times a year throughout the system to ensure its safety every day.



Pitchers are a good alternative for business meetings and public events.



What's the environmental impact of bottled water? Think before you drink.

The environmental impact of bottled water is profound.

- It takes an estimated 1.5 million barrels of oil to make the plastic water bottles Americans use each year.¹
- Americans throw away 38 million recyclable plastic water bottles into landfills each year, taking more than 1,000 years to biodegrade and leaching toxics into ground water.²
- Water coolers and individual water bottles are extremely heavy to transport. Distribution of bottled water by boat, truck and train involves burning massive quantities of fossil fuels.
- Bottled water is often from a municipal source. Water diverted from local aquifers for the bottled water industry can strain surrounding ecosystems.

All of this waste and pollution is generated by a product that by objective standards is often inferior to the quality of San Francisco's pristine tap water.

Thank You

Thank you for your efforts to protect our natural resources and make San Francisco a healthier place to call home.

For more information on San Francisco's water quality and for a copy of Mayor Newsom's Executive Directive, please visit www.sfwater.org or www.sfenvironment.org

¹ "Bottled Water: Pouring Resources Down the Drain" Earth Policy Institute, February 2, 2006. June 28, 2007.

² "Message in a Bottle" Fast Company Magazine, July 2007.



Many City departments will replace bottled water dispensers with bottle-less dispensers that deliver Hetch Hetchy tap water.



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