



## Health Officials Advise Caution on Bottled Water

**If you smell gas or chemicals, do not drink or use.**

**For Immediate Release:** Feb. 22, 2013

**Media Contacts:**

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802-863-7281

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation  
802-585-4912

BURLINGTON – Vermont health officials are advising anyone who has purchased either 3-gallon or 5-gallon drinking water bottles since Nov 1, 2012 to open and check for gasoline odor before using the water.

Clean water is odorless. If you smell gasoline or chemical fumes, do not drink or use the water.

This precaution is being urged following reports from Massachusetts that plastic water bottles of these sizes may have become contaminated by being used to store fuel and then recycled back to drinking water bottlers.

Only 3-gallon or 5-gallon size bottled water containers are affected.

If you find a water bottle with an odor, notify the **Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation** at 802-585-4912, 7 a.m. - 4 p.m. weekdays.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, after Super Storm Sandy struck the eastern seaboard in October, some gasoline shortages were reported in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, and some residents used empty containers such as large water bottles to transport gasoline. Laboratory tests conducted by Massachusetts state officials on a sample taken from a 5-gallon container of Poland Springs bottled drinking water showed the presence of small amounts of chemicals including benzene. This indicates gasoline contamination.

Other bottled water suppliers who use refillable plastic bottles could also be affected by this event.

In the past three months, bottled water companies have had an increased number of returned water bottles found to contain gasoline residue or fumes. Despite disinfection and sanitation efforts, a small number of contaminated bottles are believed to have recycled back to consumers, based on a number of consumer complaints.

Neither the Vermont Department of Health nor the Department of Environmental Conservation, which regulates public drinking water supplies in the state, have received reports of contaminated bottled water.

The possible health effects of consuming water contaminated with these chemicals will depend on the amount of exposure. If you can smell chemicals, you can assume contamination. If you have health concerns, contact your health care provider.

If you use refillable bottled water containers for anything other than drinking water, for the protection of everyone, do not recycle back to the water supplier.

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