



Rainwater and drinking water information

Q. What's the amount of radiation that would signal a health concern for drinking water?

A. The Environmental Protection Agency sets the maximum contaminant level for beta-emitting radiation in drinking water at four millirems per year. You can [download](#) the EPA list of contaminants and allowable levels in drinking water from the agency's website.

Q. Has radiation been detected in Oregon drinking water?

A. No. The Environmental Protection Agency testing has not found radiation in Oregon drinking water.

Q. Is Oregon's rainwater safe?

A. Yes. The main risk from radiation in rainwater would be from drinking it, untreated and unfiltered. It does not pose a risk at levels that have been measured in Oregon.

The highest measurement in Oregon rainwater, taken on March 22, was 164 picocuries per liter. The only radioactive material detected was iodine 131. Subsequent tests have shown levels of 87, 13, and 5 picocuries per liter, so the level appears to be dropping.

Health effects from iodine 131 arise mainly if it is ingested at much higher levels than this and over a long period of time. The main risk from this type of radiation in rainwater would be to people who used unfiltered rainwater as their sole source of drinking water, but even if this is the sole source of drinking water, a person would have to drink a half gallon of unfiltered water containing the maximum contaminant level allowed by EPA every day for 70 years to face possible health effects.

The current trace levels found in Oregon rainwater (five picocuries per liter or 0.5 millirems per year) are below the level that would pose a significant health risk, even if a person drinks rainwater as the sole source of water every day.

Oregon Public Health Division and EPA will continue to track the situation and will notify the public if it becomes necessary to avoid using rainwater for drinking.

Q. Is it safe to be out in the rain?

A. Yes. There is no health risk from getting rainwater on you.

Q. Has Oregon's drinking water been tested for radiation?

A. Yes. Samples of Oregon tap water tested to date show no radiation from events in Japan.

Oregon Public Health Division (OPHD) and EPA will continue to monitor tap water. In addition, OPHD is making sure that all drinking water systems know how to get their water tested for the presence of radioactive elements. As with all other radiation data related to the situation in Japan, OPHD will continue to update its website when new information is available.