



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

ELIZABETH A. CHAR, MD
DIRECTOR

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Trace levels of contaminants detected in Waiawa Correctional Facility water system

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) is reporting that low levels of Tetrahydrofuran (THF) and 2-Butanone were recently detected for the first time in water samples collected at the Waiawa Correctional Facility on O'ahu. The facility operates its own water system that is separate from other public water systems.

While samples were collected throughout the facility, the chemicals were only detected at the guard shack at the Waiawa Correctional Facility entrance gate. The levels of these detections are so small that they do not pose a public health threat. Drinking water within the system remains safe, as the trace levels detected were far below levels that would cause health effects.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) tap water Regional Screening Level for THF is 340 micrograms per liter (ug/L). The level of THF detected through initial and confirmatory sampling ranged from 32 ug/L to 87.8 ug/L, about 10-25% of the Regional Screening Level.

The EPA tap water Regional Screening Level for 2-Butanone is 560 ug/L. The level of 2-Butanone detection ranged from 7.7 ug/L to 33.5 ug/L, about 1-6% of the RSL.

THF and 2-Butanone are used in many common items. THF is a synthetic compound used in solvents, polymer coatings, cellophane, adhesives, magnetic strips, and printing inks. It is also used in manufacturing items such as rubber, resins, plastics, dyes, lacquers, spandex, PVC pipe, adhesives, and food storage packaging materials. People can be exposed to THF through the air, food, water, or touching products that have THF in them.

2-Butanone is a synthetic compound used in solvents involving gums and resins. It is also used in manufacturing paraffin wax, and in household products such as lacquer and varnishes, paint remover, and glues. 2-Butanone exposure can be through air, water, and touching products that contain the chemical.

DOH will continue to work together with Waiawa Correctional Facility on follow-up testing for these chemicals. The water system continues to be in full compliance with all federal and state standards for drinking water.

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