

First Drinking Water Standard for Hexavalent Chromium Is Now Final

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) announced the regulations establishing the nation's first drinking water standard for hexavalent chromium (chromium-6) of 10 parts per billion (ppb) have been approved by the Office of Administrative Law. The drinking water standard for hexavalent chromium became effective on July 1.

“California is the first and only state in the nation to establish a maximum contaminant level specifically for chromium-6 in drinking water,” said Dr. Ron Chapman, CDPH director and public health officer. “Establishing this maximum contaminant level (MCL) underscores California’s commitment to safe drinking water standards to protect the public health.”

The regulations set the MCL for hexavalent chromium in drinking water at 10 ppb and specifically regulate the hexavalent form of chromium. This is one-fifth the current total chromium standard of 50 ppb, which includes both trivalent chromium (chromium-3) and hexavalent chromium. The federal MCL for total chromium is 100 ppb. Chromium-3 is less toxic than chromium-6 and actually an essential nutrient at low dosages, while chromium-6 may pose a risk of cancer when ingested.

California adopted the first national law requiring an MCL for hexavalent chromium in 2001. State law requires a public health goal be established before an MCL may be set—and the MCL be set as close to the public health goal as economically and technologically feasible. The public health goal of 0.02 ppb was announced in July 2011.

The department performed a series of rigorous analyses that considered, among other things: the occurrence of hexavalent chromium in drinking water sources statewide; the methods, feasibility, and costs of detection; and treatment and monitoring technology. The department also considered extensive public comment from public and private stakeholders during the regulatory process, including from public water systems.

CDPH considered more than 18,000 public comments on the proposed standard before submitting a final proposal for approval. The state drinking water program will review the hexavalent chromium MCL at least every five years after its adoption.

For more information about hexavalent chromium, go to CDPH’s website and visit the [chromium-6 page](#).