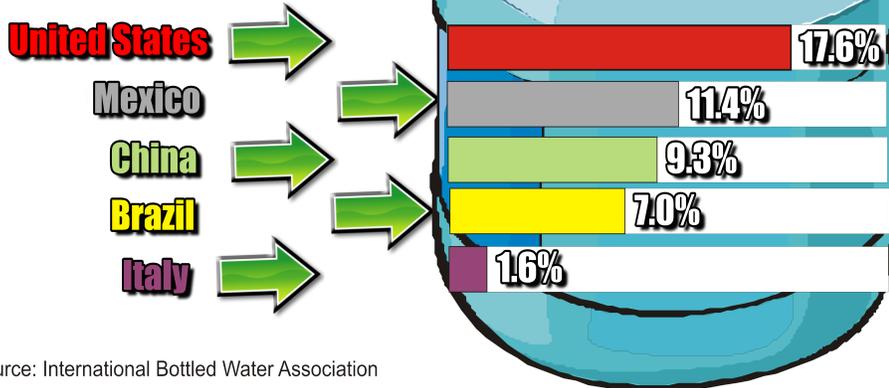


BOTTLED WATER... FACT AND FICTION

BOTTLED WATER DRINKERS

Countries with the largest share of the world's bottled water sales in 2006.



Source: International Bottled Water Association

In these tough economic times almost everyone is looking for easy ways to stretch their budget. The City of Santa Clara Water Department would like to help. We have a simple idea that will help save you money as well as help the environment. Did you know that if you stop buying bottled water and switch to your local tap water you can personally save a bundle. In addition, while there is no real way to put a dollar amount on the damage done to the environment from bottled water, by not purchasing it you can help cut down on the amount of virgin petroleum that is required to make disposable water bottles and keep them from ending up in the landfill.

The United States is the world's largest bottled water consumer. In 2007, 8.82 billion gallons of bottled water were consumed, yet we have one of the best and safest public water systems in the world. The City of Santa Clara's tap water costs approximately \$.003 a gallon. The bottled water consumer can shell out anywhere from \$2.50 to \$10 a gallon. With U.S. sales of bottled water reaching over \$11.7 billion dollars in 2007, that's nothing to sneeze at.

If you are one of the lucky ones that aren't concerned about the expense of bottled

water, the lack of oversight of bottled water health regulation compliance may give you pause. Contaminant limits (called Maximum Contaminant Levels-MCL) in both tap and bottled water are prescribed by the California Department of Public Health. The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) oversees bottled water compliance utilizing those MCL. However, FDA supervision only applies to bottled water sold over state lines. Sixty to seventy percent of bottled water is produced within the state that it is sold in. Since it is largely up to the bottlers to ensure that their product is safe and complies with regulations only thirty to forty percent of bottled water is tested. Tap water, on the other hand, is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency. One hundred percent of our City's water is tested for quality by trained/certified professionals. City water is tested at the Water Treatment Plant 1-10 times a day, while the average bottler tests once a week, once a year, or once every four years depending on the contaminant being tested for. You may have noticed that you received a consumer confidence report in the mail earlier this year detailing what contaminants are present in your City tap water and at what levels (you can also find this report online at http://santaclaraca.gov/pub_utility/ws_water_quality.html and click on Consumer Confidence Report 2008 or by calling to request a copy at (408) 615-2000). This report is generated yearly in compliance with State regulations and contains data from over 5,000 water samples taken last year. The City samples water from 34 different sampling stations located throughout the City of Santa Clara's distribution system each week. The samples are sent to a certified laboratory that utilizes state-of-the-art analytical equipment. The City of Santa Clara's water shows a clean bill of health. You won't find this kind of report provided to you by bottling companies. Bottlers not only don't have to tell you what's in their water they are not even required to tell you where the water you're drinking really comes from. In 2006, more than \$162.8 million dollars was spent on bottled water advertising in the U.S. in order to convince the public that their water is better than that which flows from the tap.

Rarely does the bottled water come from the pristine mountain wilderness streams depicted in the scenes on the bottles or in the commercials. Ironically, more than twenty-five percent of bottled water comes from a public source and this includes some of the most popular bottled water brands. Besides questions of water quality, bottled water has a questionable effect on the environment. Some imported water is shipped from exotic tropical islands and countries thousand of miles away. Bottled water requires oil to be used to ship it overseas and even water bottled in the United States will need fuel for the trucks that deliver it to the stores. Due to the weight of the water, delivery trucks can not even carry full loads of this product at a time. Virgin petroleum is required to make the type of plastic that bottled water is packaged in, recycled plastic is not used for this purpose. It takes approximately 24 gallons of water to produce one pound of plastic. In addition to the energy and resources required to make the plastic bottles, one should consider what happens to the bottles once the water is consumed. Most of the 28 billion plastic water bottles used each year are recyclable, however, less than twenty percent are actually recycled. Of those turned in for recycling in 2004, forty percent of them were shipped overseas to be recycled requiring more oil for this transportation.

Many people site taste as a major reason they prefer bottled water to tap. That taste can usually be associated with chlorine or chloramines used to disinfect some City water. 66.8 % of the City's water comes from deep wells that do not have bacteriological contamination and therefore do not require these disinfection chemicals. If you receive water that you feel does not taste good try putting the tap water in a pitcher in the refrigerator. Cold temperatures help to dissipate the chemical taste. If you are worried about taste as well as lead or rust from your pipes you may wish to purchase a water filter designed for this purpose. Just be sure to regularly change the filter following the manufacturer's recommendations.

Bottled water is not that convenient when you think about the time it takes to go purchase the water, haul around the heavy bottles from the store to your car and from your car into your house, in addition to the hassle required to find space to store all those bottles. Nor is bottled water assuredly safe of all contaminants or environmentally friendly. All that bother and expense to drink water that can be easily enjoyed by merely turning on your faucet at home.

If you have questions about your water, visit us on the web at http://santaclaraca.gov/pub_utility/ws_dept.html

Or call us at (408) 615-2000.

**only thirty to
forty percent
of bottled water
is tested**

For more information call the City of Santa Clara Water & Sewer Utility at 615-2000, stop by the utilities office at City Hall at 1500 Warburton Ave., or visit the website at www.santaclaraca.gov