



59000 Hwy 69 N • PO Box 86
Westcliffe, CO 81252-0086
(719) 783-2604
<https://rmwsd.colorado.gov>

Round Mountain Water and Sanitation District (RMWSD) has received several questions pertaining to the public notice that has recently been sent out to RMWSD customers.

The first concern to address is the potable water quality. The municipal water is **SAFE** to drink. **NO** contamination has been introduced into the water system.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) conducted a routine Sanitary Survey of the RMWSD water system on April 5, 2022. During that inspection, CDPHE found that RMWSD had not met compliance targets in backflow protection and had not performed a 3-year inspection on the south water storage tank.

Concerning the backflow protection violation, some background information may be helpful.

In 2015, CDPHE mandated all public drinking water systems to inspect all properties within their districts to assess potential cross-connection issues. After that inspection is complete, CDPHE mandates the water districts to force certain customers (usually commercial customers) to install backflow devices on their water service lines to protect the distribution system. After the backflow devices are installed, CDPHE mandates RMWSD to require customers with backflow devices to have them tested yearly and RMWSD must send a yearly report to CDPHE, outlining the number of customers in compliance. This idea looks really good on paper, but this program has been very difficult to complete due to the following factors:

- You don't have to live in the Westcliffe area very long to find out that people around here don't like to be told what to do. Many have been "resistant" to allow inspections, install devices, or to have devices yearly inspected.
- Large city water systems hire a dedicated cross-connection technician. However, rural water systems (RMWSD included) do not have the financial capability to hire additional staff and existing operations staff must try to complete this project while attending to existing responsibilities.
- A 40-hour certification course is required to be a back-flow inspector. We had two technicians certified, but one lost the certification during the Covid pandemic as no re-certification classes were offered during that time. We now have only one certified inspector.
- CDPHE offers no financial or personnel aid to rural districts to assist in completing this mandated project and rural water systems must absorb the financial cost and additional man-hours into already stretched budgets and time constraints.

RMWSD has been conducting cross-connection inspections during the winter months as operational responsibilities are reduced at that time. We will continue to inspect and enforce back-flow device compliance until we meet CDPHE compliance guidelines. We just won't be able to accomplish it as fast as CDPHE wants and will be in violation of their expectations until completion. We are doing the best we can with what we have.

Concerning the water storage tank violation, some background information may be helpful.

RMWSD hired a company to completely rehabilitate the two water storage tanks north of Silver Cliff in 2015. They were brought completely up to code at that time. In 2017, CDPHE mandated public water systems to perform scheduled inspections and cleaning of finished water storage tanks. RMWSD has complied with these regulations until 2021, when RMWSD could not perform a mandated empty tank cleaning due to one of the municipal wells failing and going off-line. Without the second well, RMWSD could not supply the district water demand and fill the 250,000-gallon tank at the same time. This cleaning will be scheduled when the second well is back on-line, likely in the spring of 2023.

The water storage tanks are in excellent shape, and we received the violation only because we could not comply with the 3-year cleaning requirement.

RMWSD is committed to provide excellent and safe drinking water and effective wastewater treatment. RMWSD is also committed to solving the significant operating and financial challenges that currently exist. Please contact us with any questions or concerns you may have.

Dave Schneider CWP
District Manager
Round Mountain Water and Sanitation District
719-783-2604