

Environment & Energy

California Adopts Rule to Test Drinking Water for Microplastics

By Zach Bright

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- Dozens of water providers to begin testing 2023
 - State board has yet to identify safe level
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California is set to be the first state in the nation to test its drinking water for microplastics, after a unanimous vote from the state's water regulator.

The State Water Resources Control Board approved a policy handbook on Wednesday that requires up to 30 of California's largest water providers to begin testing for microplastics, starting in 2023. Microplastics can enter the environment from machine-washing synthetic clothing and the breakdown of certain plastics, and normal wastewater treatment plants aren't able to filter them out.

Under the plan, sites including the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and San Francisco Regional Water System will have to monitor water for two years. Then contamination levels will be evaluated for six months.

A safe level of microplastics in drinking water has yet to be determined by the state water board.

To comply, local water agencies are estimated to pay \$1,000 to \$2,000 per sample, leading to requests for state funds.

Testing drinking water for microplastics was launched by S.B. 1422, a law passed in 2018 that requires four years of testing to determine the scope of and establish guidelines for microplastic pollution. The board defined them in 2020 as plastic particles with three dimensions that are less than 5 millimeters in length.

Microplastics are a global concern. From the United Nations Environment Assembly's fifth session in February and March came the beginnings of an intergovernmental committee to negotiate a legally binding agreement to tackle plastics and microplastics. Parties are aiming to conclude talks by the end of 2024.

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Documents

Final Rule
[Policy Handbook](#)

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