

Sanitation Districts Pass Ordinance Banning Residential Self-Regenerating Water Softeners in Santa Clarita Valley

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SANTA CLARITA, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Feb. 25, 2003--Santa Clarita Valley residents will soon be prohibited from installing self-regenerating water softeners, including new and replacement units, in their homes due to an ordinance passed today by Sanitation Districts No. 26 and No. 32 of Los Angeles County. Districts No. 26 and No. 32 service the wastewater treatment and disposal needs of the Santa Clarita Valley.

The ordinance was passed by the Sanitation Districts' Boards of Directors in an effort to reduce the amount of chloride being discharged into the Santa Clara River. The new ordinance prohibits the installation of residential self-regenerating water softeners and is the first such ordinance to be enacted under a California state law which became effective on Jan. 1, 2003. The ordinance does not apply to water softeners that use exchange tanks that are regenerated off-site.

Chloride is one of the main parts of sodium chloride, commonly known as table salt or rock salt. Self-regenerating water softeners discharge a salty waste that contains large amounts of chloride. Wastewater from homes in the Santa Clarita Valley, including the salty softener waste, is treated at the Sanitation Districts' Saugus and Valencia Water Reclamation Plants. After extensive treatment, which does not remove chloride from wastewater, the treated water is put into the Santa Clara River.

"The concentration of chloride in the Santa Clara River is rising and needs to be significantly reduced to meet water quality standards," indicated Jim Stahl, Chief Engineer and General Manager of the Sanitation Districts. "Our research demonstrates that two-thirds of the chloride added to sewers by Santa Clarita Valley residents is from self-regenerating water softeners. Virtually all of the chloride added as rock salt to self-regenerating water softeners ends up in the Santa Clara River."

If the amount of chloride entering sewers in the Santa Clarita Valley is not reduced through banning new residential self-regenerating water softeners, the Sanitation Districts may have to install new treatment equipment at the Saugus and Valencia Water Reclamation Plants to remove the chloride. This would cost in excess of \$400 million.

"If extra treatment is required at the water reclamation plants, the cost would have to be passed on to Santa Clarita Valley residences and businesses. We estimate that the sewer bills would increase by four to five times the current rate," added Stahl.

"Our hope is that this ordinance will help us avoid installing this very expensive treatment alternative at ratepayers' expense, while protecting the Santa Clara River and its natural habitat," said City of Santa Clarita Mayor Cameron Smyth, who is also Chairperson of Sanitation Districts No. 26 and No. 32.

Residents who violate the new ordinance will be subject to a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or imprisonment not to exceed 30 days. The Sanitation Districts will be responsible for enforcing the ordinance. Only residences served by Sanitation Districts No. 26 and No. 32 are affected by the ordinance. Santa Clarita businesses have been banned from using self-regenerating water softeners since 1962.

The Districts are a group of 25 independent special districts serving the wastewater and solid waste management needs of over 5 million people in Los Angeles County. The Districts' service area includes 78 cities and unincorporated territory within the county, including the Santa Clarita Valley. The role of the Districts is to construct, operate, and maintain regional systems to collect, treat, and dispose of wastewater and to provide for management of solid wastes. The Directors of the 25 separate districts are the mayors and certain council members of the cities within a district and the Chairperson

of the County Board of Supervisors for unincorporated areas.

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