



MUNICIPALITE DE SALVAN

Salvan, 3 december 2018

Compliance with maximum limit of arsenic in drinking water

Dear secondary home owner,

Until 2014, Swiss legislation allowed a maximum limit of arsenic in drinking water of 50 micrograms per litre (50µg/l). Since then, based on the European limit, also recommended by the World Health Organization, this **standard** has been **reduced fivefold**. Swiss communes have until 1 January 2019 to comply with the new maximum limit of 10 µg/l.

As stated at the communal meeting, our commune's water currently has an arsenic content higher than the new legal standard. This is a **temporary situation** and the communal administration is working to ensure the water supply meets the new standards. The administration will shortly issue a timetable for the different steps necessary for this standardisation.

According to the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO), standards have been tightened to prevent health problems in consumers who may have absorbed significant quantities of water throughout their entire lifetime. This does not cast doubt on the **quality of the spring water distributed throughout our commune, which has always complied with the drinking water standards in force**, and which, apart from its natural arsenic level, is excellent in terms of its chemical and bacteriological quality.

As a reminder, arsenic occurs naturally in certain types of rock found in the particular geology of cantons such as Valais, Graubünden and Ticino. The substance is **dissolved upon contact with ground water** and then enters the drinking water supply. In Valais, several communes exceed the legal limit of 10 µg/l, among which are Vernayaz, Collonges, Salvan and Finhaut. The highest level of arsenic measured in Salvan's water supply is 17 µg/l, with an average level of 13 µg/l, i.e. very close to new requirements. This level has not changed in years.

The Société de turbinage de la vallée du Trient (ST EVT) has been commissioned to **address this problem at regional level**. Various solutions are being drawn up and will be implemented gradually. The aim is to find **new sources**, or to **blend water** from higher-arsenic sources with water from a "purer" source, or even to install **an arsenic removal system**. We are aware that substantial investments will have to be made.

While work is being done to comply with the new standard, the communes can continue to supply tap water. Nevertheless, we would like to remind you that this **water is considered unfit for drinking or for preparing beverages and food** such as cordials, coffee, tea, soup or ice cream, etc. **It can however be used for the usual household purposes** (washing up, laundry, showers, or watering the garden, etc.) as well as for the **rinsing of foodstuffs with subsequent draining** for the preparation of meals. It can also be consumed by animals.

Although the commune council considers the use of bottled water unnecessary, **residents who so wish can obtain bottled mineral water (without gaz) free of charge** for their own consumption, **upon presentation of a residence certificate**. To obtain the required certificate, please contact our communal offices at +41 27 761 71 11 or send an email to commune@salvan.ch.

Please note that **the village of Granges, the hamlet of Bioley, La Creusaz as well as part of Van-d'en-Bas are not affected by this problem.**

The village of Marécottes (apart from les Peutex), and the hamlet of la Médettaz are also exempt, but may, depending on the hydrological situation, need to be reassessed.

These zones are detailed in the attached map (printed on both sides). A plan of the commune's entire territory, showing the zones concerned and those that are not can also be consulted on our internet site at www.salvan.ch (services communaux / eau potable).

We hope that this letter has helped clarify the situation regarding the water supply in our commune and would be glad to answer any further questions you may have.

We will keep you informed of the steps taken and of the date from when our drinking water will comply with the new legislation.

Yours faithfully,

Le Président :  Le Secrétaire : 
PIASENTA Florian GILARDI Cédric

The seal of the Commune de Salvan is circular with a blue border. Inside the border, the words "COMMUNE DE SALVAN" are written in a circle around a central emblem. The emblem features a shield with a cross and a star below it.

Attachment: as mentioned

Copy: Canton of Valais, Veterinary Affairs Department