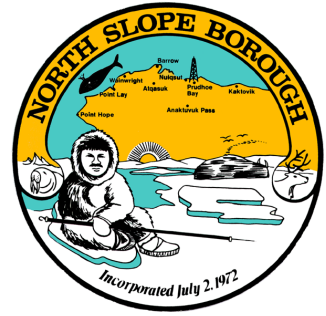


North Slope Borough

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

P.O. Box 69
Barrow, Alaska 99723
Phone: (907) 852-0200
Fax: (907) 852-0337



Josiah A. Patkotak, Mayor

September 10, 2026

info@north-slope.org

PUBLIC NOTICE: KAKTOVIK — DO NOT DRINK THE WATER

KAKTOVIK, Alaska — The North Slope Borough, in coordination with Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS) Emergency Management and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), continues to urge Kaktovik residents **not to drink the community water** while testing and investigation continue following the detection of ethylene glycol in the water system.

Safe drinking water is available for pickup at the Kaktovik Water Treatment Plant. Borough health staff are also available at the Kaktovik Medical Clinic for residents who have health concerns or would like to be evaluated.

Important:

- **Do not drink the water.**
- **Boiling the water will NOT make it safe to drink.**
- **Do not use the water for cooking or food preparation, making beverages or ice, or brushing teeth.**
- **Continue using an alternative source of drinking water until the North Slope Borough announces that the 'Do Not Drink' order has been lifted.**

The water may continue to be used for showering, washing dishes, and washing clothes, consistent with DEC guidance.

What We Know So Far

According to DEC, on August 16, an operator at the Kaktovik Water Treatment Plant used a mislabeled chemical container while preparing a disinfectant solution. The South Tank was isolated from the rest of the water system.

State officials calculated that the amount of ethylene glycol potentially introduced into the system was well below levels associated with known health effects. The South Tank was isolated and taken offline, and the community was supplied from the North Tank, which was believed to be unaffected.

DEC directed that samples be collected from the South Tank and distribution system and sent to a certified laboratory for analysis.

On September 5, DEC received laboratory results showing an ethylene glycol concentration of 26 mg/L in the distribution system, substantially higher than initially estimated. Following review of the results, a 'Do Not Drink' order was issued.

The Borough notified residents and mobilized emergency drinking water supplies to Kaktovik.

What Does the 26 mg/L Result Mean?

DEC and Alaska Department of Health (DOH) advise that the concentration detected does not represent a known acute health risk for adults. According to state health officials, ethylene glycol is processed and eliminated from the body relatively quickly and trace-level exposure has not been shown to cause adverse health effects.

However, the 26 mg/L laboratory result exceeded drinking water health guidance. For that reason, the 'Do Not Drink' order was issued as a protective measure and will remain in place while additional testing and evaluation are completed.

Residents who have health concerns are encouraged to contact their health care provider or visit the Kaktovik Medical Clinic.

Why Were Residents Previously Told the Water Was Safe to Drink?

The initial guidance was based on the information available to DEC at the time.

The South Tank had been isolated and taken offline, the North Tank was believed to be unaffected, and calculations based on the reported amount of chemical involved indicated an estimated ethylene glycol concentration far below levels associated with known health effects.

DEC ordered laboratory testing to confirm those assumptions.

When results received September 5 showed a substantially higher concentration of ethylene glycol in the distribution system than initially estimated, the guidance changed and a 'Do Not Drink' order was issued that day.

What Happens Next?

Additional samples were collected September 7 from the North Tank, South Tank, and both distribution loops. Those samples have been sent to a certified laboratory for glycol analysis.

The 'Do Not Drink' order will remain in effect while those results are pending.

If glycol is detected in either storage tank, DEC has advised that the affected water will need to be treated to remove the glycol or discarded. The Borough will continue working closely with DEC, DOH and Ukpeaġvik Iñupiat Corporation are working to determine the appropriate corrective actions and ensure the water is safe before the order is lifted.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I drink the water?

No. Continue using bottled or emergency-supplied drinking water until the 'Do Not Drink' order is formally lifted.

Where can I get safe drinking water?

Safe drinking water is available for pickup at the **Kaktovik Water Treatment Plant**.

I am concerned that I or a family member may have been exposed. What should I do?

Residents with health concerns can visit the Kaktovik Medical Clinic. Borough health staff and ASNA medical staff are available to provide evaluations and answer questions.

Can I boil the water to make it safe?

No. Boiling does not remove ethylene glycol and will not make the water safe to drink.

Can I cook with the water?

No. Use bottled or emergency-supplied water for cooking, food preparation, beverages, ice and brushing teeth.

Can I shower, wash dishes, or wash clothes with the water?

Yes. Consistent with DEC guidance, the water may continue to be used for these purposes.

How much ethylene glycol was detected?

Laboratory results received September 5 detected ethylene glycol at 26 mg/L in the distribution system.

Is that level dangerous?

DEC and DOH advise that 26 mg/L does not represent a known acute health risk for adults. However, the concentration exceeds drinking water health guidance, including EPA's lifetime drinking water health advisory level. The 'Do Not Drink' order was issued to protect public health while additional testing is conducted.

Why did earlier information say the water was safe?

The initial assessment was based on the reported amount of chemical involved, the isolation of the South Tank, and the understanding that the North Tank was unaffected. Based on the information provided at the time, DEC and DOH initially calculated an estimated concentration of approximately 0.024 mg/L. Laboratory results received September 5 later detected 26 mg/L in the distribution system, and a 'Do Not Drink' order was issued that day.

When will we know whether the water is safe?

Samples collected September 7 are undergoing laboratory analysis. The 'Do Not Drink' order will remain in place while testing and evaluation continue.

Please continue using an alternative source of drinking water until the North Slope Borough formally announces that the 'Do Not Drink' order has been lifted.