



Santa Clarita Automatic Water Softener Ban Declared a Success IEUA to Consider Water Softener Discharge Ordinance

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Inland Empire - Today, in a presentation before the Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA), the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County declared that the automatic water softener ban and removal program implemented in the area of Santa Clarita over the past two years was clearly successful.

The Santa Clarita automatic water softener ban was approved by a public vote in 2008 to help reduce the amount of salt discharged to the Santa Clarita Valley Water Treatment System and released into the Santa Clara River. With the implementation of the automatic water softener ban and removal program, the chloride discharged by existing water softeners was reduced significantly. This represented a potential savings of more than \$110 million to the residents of Santa Clarita in comparison to installing expensive salt removal technologies at the sewage treatment plants.

"This is very helpful information and we appreciate learning how well the water softener ban worked as IEUA and our cities consider how to deal with the salt impacts to water supplies caused by the home use of automatic water softeners in our service area," said IEUA Board President Terry Catlin. "IEUA currently offers a rebate program to homeowners who want to remove their automatic water softeners. Homeowners can receive up to \$2,000 for qualifying water softeners, and the removal service by a professional plumber is free. For more information on how you can take advantage of the rebate, visit www.ieua.org," continued Catlin.

"Most people don't know that automatic water softeners – the type homeowners have to buy bags of salt for – pose a major threat to our water supplies because of the huge amounts of salt they discharge into the sewage treatment system" said IEUA Board Member John L. Anderson. "It's a big water quality problem especially for places like the Chino Basin where we depend upon our groundwater and recycled water supplies to meet our water needs," said Anderson.

"Just one of these home systems will use an average of 30 pounds of salt per month -- that's over 360 pounds of salt per year!" declared IEUA Secretary/Treasurer Michael Camacho. "When you multiply that much salt by thousands of households with automatic water softeners, we have a big pollution problem, especially here in the Chino Basin where 70% of our water supplies come from local sources," continued Camacho.

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Because of the need to protect local water supplies, every major source of salt within the Chino Basin is currently regulated with the exception of the discharge from home use of automatic water softeners. Last fall, Assembly Bill 1366 was signed into law by Governor Schwarzenegger to provide cities and water agencies authority to regulate discharge from home water softeners in areas where the regional water quality board has determined that there is a particular salinity problem. IEUA is considering the development of an ordinance that will encourage the use of alternative water systems that do not pollute and ban those that do.

“We have been working to reduce salts and protect our water supplies in the Chino Basin for decades,” said IEUA Board Member Gene Koopman. “Our cities and water agencies have invested hundreds of millions of dollars over the past ten years to protect the quality of our water. If the water becomes too salty, it is tremendously expensive to remove enough salt to make it useable – it would be 10 to 20 times more than the five bucks per bag of water softening salt that a homeowner may be paying today. That’s why we are considering all options for reducing the salty discharge that comes from automatic water softeners,” said Koopman

“We’ve already removed over 200 water softeners through the rebate program – that’s keeping 72,000 pounds of salt per year, equivalent to 1,800 bags of salt out of the water supply,” said IEUA Vice President Angel Santiago. “Homeowners can install alternative systems that don’t discharge the salt, including the softeners that use the off-site regenerated exchange cylinders that can be traded out as needed; and the salt disposed of without harming our water supply,” continued Director Santiago.

“Successful automatic water softener control programs, like the ones being implemented in Santa Clarita, are really important to the long term protection of our water supplies,” declared President Catlin. “We’re doing our homework to develop a program that will deliver equal success for the protection of our water supplies.”

The Inland Empire Utilities Agency is a municipal water district located in western San Bernardino County, California. The Agency’s mission is to supply imported drinking water and recycled water, to collect and treat wastewater, and provide other utility-related services to the 850,000 residents living within its service area.

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