

Just the Facts...

Response to Suspected Tampering of Bottled Water

Bottled Water as a Potential Target

The Army is committed to providing all Soldiers safe water to drink, both in garrison and on the battlefield. Bottled water is often a part of the drinking water supplied to Soldiers during deployment. It is safe and palatable, and is often perceived to be a “comfort” item for troops. The bottled water used in-theatre is tested before being purchased to ensure it meets U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) standards. However, bottled water can be intentionally or unintentionally contaminated because some steps in the procurement and distribution of bottled water on the battlefield are outside of direct military control and supervision. This presents an opportunity for an adversary to strike at Soldiers by tampering with bottled water supplies. Sabotage of bottled water at any point in the system could harm Soldiers, erode their confidence in the quality of the water supply, and disrupt their ability to accomplish the mission.

Monitor for the Threat

All Soldiers play an important role in the safety of bottled water supplies. Proper vigilance of bottled water supplies can reduce the risk of a successful tampering attempt. All Soldiers should be aware that their water is a potential target and should report any suspicious activity or events through their chain of command.

Most intentional tampering efforts will involve chemical or biological contaminants. Intentional tampering will usually compromise the integrity and safety of individual bottles. Signs of tampering may include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Broken seal around the cap
- ◆ Pin holes in the cap or around the neck and top of the bottle
- ◆ Unusual color in the water
- ◆ Large amount of particles floating in the water
- ◆ Bad or unusual tastes or odors

Respond to the Threat

The initial response to suspected tampering is the same for Soldiers at all levels:

- ◆ Do not consume the suspected water.
- ◆ As practical, identify, set aside and do not consume other bottles from the same batch/lot/package.
- ◆ Notify your immediate supervisor / chain of command about the incident.

Additional response procedures should be conducted by Soldiers with specific unit responsibilities:

1. Unit Supply Supervisors:

- ◆ Assess the reports and evidence of tampering events.
- ◆ Visually inspect the specific lots of water. Decide the extent of possible tampering and quarantine suspected bottles.

- ◆ Secure suspect bottles in such a way that they cannot be accidentally distributed or consumed by Soldiers.
- ◆ Coordinate to provide other sources of unit potable water.
- ◆ Report the event to local Preventive Medicine, Veterinary, or command medical personnel to further investigate the suspected tampering.

2. Preventive Medicine/Medical Personnel:

- ◆ Assess the reports and evidence of tampering.
- ◆ Use appropriate personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves) if the likelihood and evidence of tampering is high.
- ◆ Report the event to the operational and medical chain of command.
- ◆ Report the event to Law Enforcement personnel. Chain-of-custody of bottled water may be an issue if tampering is confirmed.
- ◆ Contact USAPHC (Prov) or other higher echelon unit for testing support. Do not try and determine the safety of the bottled water supply using rudimentary field tests. They are not adequate to rule out a number of potential contaminants.
- ◆ Assist in sampling by following instructions carefully. Do not repackage samples into other containers.

Summary

The Army is committed to ensuring that all Soldiers are provided safe bottled water to drink. Soldiers at all levels should protect their bottled water through positive control and supervision. Any evidence of tampering should be reported immediately and investigated fully.