



HOME > NEWS > LOCAL

## Survey: Drinking Water Compliance Eludes Some California Schools

A survey, soon to be published, said 1 in 4 schools did not comply with the law.

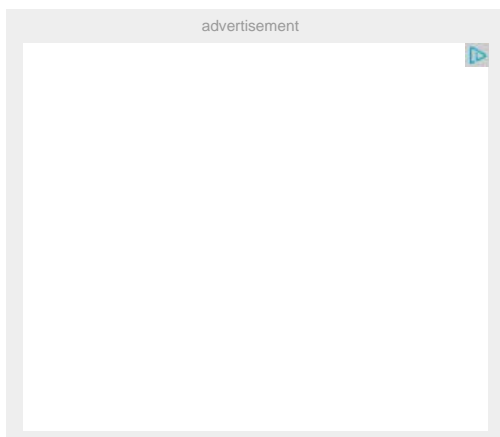
By Bernice Yeung | Tuesday, Oct 23, 2012 | Updated 8:13 AM PDT

View Comments () | Email | Print | +1 0 | Tweet 1 | Recommend | Send



Getty Images

(Photo by Tim Boyle/Getty Images)



Since the start of the 2010 school year, thirsty students at Turlock High School can visit a "hydration station," a state-of-the-art drinking fountain that provides filtered and chilled water.

The high-tech fountain, which has also filled nearly 9,000 water bottles at Turlock High, south of Modesto, is part of the district's effort to comply with recently passed state and federal laws that require free, fresh water to be served at schools wherever meals are served or eaten.

### TOP STORIES

TODAY MOST WATCHED MOST EMAILED



Rain To Clear For World Series Game



CHP Ignores School Bus Drivers' Concerns



Bodies Still Not Recovered From Byron Plane Crash



Celebrity Teens: From Mild to Wild

FOLLOW NBCBAYAREA



Proponents of these laws said that the requirement promotes improved learning. "Research shows that kids that are healthy and hydrated learn better and miss less school," said Michael Danzik, nutrition education consultant with the California Department of Education.

There are also health benefits to the requirement, said Stephen Onufrak of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity. "Providing access to free drinking water is a strategy to support healthy drink choices among children," he wrote in an email.

The [California law](#) went into effect in July 2011, and the [federal law](#) was passed in December 2010.

But a soon-to-be-published survey of California public schools found that while all of the campuses had at least one free water source, 1 in 4 schools did not comply with the law. The study author, Anisha Patel of UC San Francisco, discussed the preliminary findings in a webinar last week on water access in schools.

The study of 240 randomly selected public schools was conducted between May and November 2011 by Patel and other researchers at UCSF in conjunction with nutrition and health advocacy organizations California Food Policy Advocates and ChangeLab Solutions.

Sen. Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, who introduced the state legislation, noted that the law took effect on July 1, 2011, and the study took place between May and November 2011. "These things do take time, and we will continue to monitor it," he told California Watch. "We do want to get that 75 percent compliance closer to 100 percent in the coming years."

The number of schools that provided free water in meal service areas increased after the passage of the California law, the study found. Additional findings will be discussed further at the American Public Health Association conference in San Francisco later this month.

Danzik of the California Department of Education said there is "no punitive language" in the state legislation if a school fails to offer free water, and schools can choose to opt out if meeting the law's requirements would be too financially burdensome. Under the federal law, all schools that receive funds for free or reduced meal programs will undergo an administrative review of their water access every three years once the USDA issues regulations. If they fail to follow the law, they may have to comply with a corrective action plan or in extreme cases, they could lose funding, Danzik said.

The UCSF study found that the primary reasons that schools did not provide water at mealtimes were a lack of awareness of the laws and cost.

Danzik said that the agency has provided information to all school food service directors about the law.

Ellen Braff-Guajardo of California Food Policy Advocates said that although California schools are cash-strapped, cost barriers are not insurmountable. She said that there are [affordable, short-term solutions](#), including using water coolers or filling the 3-gallon water jugs that are used at sporting events. Long-term solutions include pursuing funds through local bond measures or tapping into local philanthropy, she said.

Representatives from rural communities said they also contend with water quality problems that pose challenges to complying with the law.

The Visalia-based advocacy group Community Water Center conducted a pilot study of school water quality in the San Joaquin Valley in 2011. It found 47 of the 146 schools included in the study had 119 violations between 2005 and 2007 for contaminants ranging from bacteria to arsenic to nitrates.

In the one-gas-station town of Seville, an unincorporated farming community about 30 miles from Tulare, the local water system has elevated levels of nitrates. To make sure that students at Stone

Corral Elementary School aren't drinking the water, Principal Chris Kemper has removed some of the drinking fountains and turned off the water to the others.

Students are provided free water through dispensers in each classroom and in the cafeteria. The water coolers cost about \$400 per month from the general fund when school is in session. Kemper said he supports the law requiring his school to offer free water to students. "It gives kids the idea that water is an important part of their diet," he said.

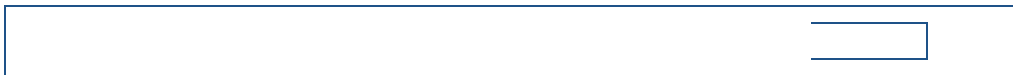
The statewide UCSF study is currently undergoing peer review. It follows on a [smaller observational study](#) of randomly sampled Bay Area schools that found that 14 of 24 schools complied with state and federal drinking water laws.

The Bay Area study also found that in the schools where free water was offered in meal service areas, only one in 25 students actually drank the water provided by the school.

"Although schools can meet regulations through installation of fountains, more appealing water delivery systems may be necessary to increase students' water intake at mealtimes," the study said.

View this story on [California Watch](#)

*This story was produced by California Watch, a part of the nonprofit Center for Investigative Reporting. Learn more at [www.californiawatch.org](http://www.californiawatch.org).*



[Privacy Policy](#) | [More Newsletters](#)

Posted Oct 23, 2012

Google+ 0 | Tweet 1 | Recommend 0 | Send

### Leave Comments

5 Foods you must not eat :  
Cut down a bit of stomach fat every day by never eating these 5 foods.

Never eat



### MORE NEWS



TECH  
**Facebook Revenue Beats Estimates**



TECH  
**Apple Releases New iPad Mini, iMac**



POLITICS  
**Obama Launches 2-Day Blitz; Romney Also Ups Pace**

[More News](#)

### MORE LOCAL



LOCAL  
**So Far, 49ers' Rookies Have Yet to Make an Impact**



LOCAL  
**Bodies Still Not Recovered From Byron Plane Crash**



THE-COVE  
**Detroit Writer Rips San Francisco as Baseball Town**

[More Local](#)

### PHOTOS AND VIDEOS



THE-COVE  
**Giants Defeat Cardinals in Final Showdown**



STORIES  
**3rd Storm In 3 Days Brings More Rain & Jeff's 7 Day Warm**



SPORTS  
**Giants Fans Celebrate Victory in the Pouring Rain**

[More Multimedia](#)

## COMMUNITY



### Bay Area Proud

Bay Area Proud is NBC Bay Area's communit... [Read](#)

[more](#)

## FOLLOW US

Sign up to receive news and updates that matter to you.



[Send Us Your Story Tips](#)

## CHECK OUT



© 2012 NBCUniversal, Inc. All rights reserved. Portions by Broadcast Interactive Media. A Division of NBCUniversal

[Terms Of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

[FCC Independent Programming Report](#)  
[FCC News and Information Programming Report](#)  
[NBC Non-Profit News Partnership Reports](#)  
[KNTV Public Inspection File](#)

AdChoices



[Archive](#) | [Feedback](#) | [About Us](#) | [Advertise](#)

### NEWS

- Local
- U.S. & World
- Sports
- Decision 2012
- Health
- Tech
- Weird
- Weather
- Press Here
- Prop Zero
- The Cove

### THE SCENE

- Food & Drink
- Fashion
- Shopping
- Events
- Real Estate
- Cars
- 1st Look
- Open House
- Worth the Drive

### ENTERTAINMENT

- Celebrity
- Movies
- Television
- Music
- PopcornBiz
- Worth the Drive

### ON AIR

- As Seen On Shows
- Contests
- Community
- About Us
- TV Schedule
- The Investigative Unit
- CNBC
- Television Without Pity
- LX.TV
- Access Hollywood
- Bravo
- iVillage

### WEATHER

- Forecast
- Maps & Radar
- Severe Weather Alerts
- Weather Stories

### TRAFFIC