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Plaintiffs' lawyer says Valley water causing illness

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PASADENA — An attorney for 200 people suing the Southern California Water Co. in a class-action lawsuit said Wednesday that water throughout the San Gabriel Valley is so tainted that hundreds of people may be

suffering from a variety of illnesses.

Attorney Mark Algorri, who filed suit against the water company several weeks ago, held a morning news conference in his Union Street office to decry the company's water-testing practices.

"We're deeply troubled and

hot and irritated about the present condition of water in the San Gabriel Valley," he said. "This is really, really a travesty. We always assumed our water was clear and here we were drinking rocket fuel."

Algorri was referring to recent studies that found several local wells operated by the util-

ity were contaminated by perchlorate — a chemical used in the manufacture of rocket fuel. Those wells have since been closed.

In an April interview, Roland Tanner, an administrative support manager with the San Dimas-based utility, denied his company ever sold customers

toxic water.

"There's no truth to it," he said.

Algorri represents plaintiffs who live in unincorporated Arcadia and portions of El Monte, Monrovia and Temple City. Among the plaintiffs is Ronald Konoske, president of the Committee Against Toxic Exposure in the San Gabriel Valley.

Konoske, who bought an full-page advertisement that appeared in this paper Wednesday, attended the news conference, but refused to speak. Algorri said Konoske suffers from liver cancer and formerly suffered from colon cancer as a result of drinking contaminated water.

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