

Families Win Suit Over Tainted Water

The AP

TACOMA - A jury has awarded \$545,000 to about 100 families in the south Pierce County town of Graham who complained that copper in their water made them sick and turned their hair and bathtubs blue.

The Pierce County Superior Court jury determined that Sound Water had failed to adequately treat the naturally acidic water in the English Gardens subdivision between 1993 and 1997. Last week's decision in the class-action lawsuit concluded a two-week trial.

Most of the plaintiffs moved into the area three years ago. At that time, Sound Water served about 3,000 homes in Spanaway and Graham. Rainier View Water bought the company in 1997.

The lawsuit alleged that when Sound's well water ran through the copper pipes of the 115-home residential development, the acidic water leached harmful amounts of copper into the tap water.

Corrie Yackulic, the attorney who represented the English Gardens residents, said Sound Water officials had known about the problem since 1993, when tests of eight of 20 sampled homes showed high levels of copper.

After the company was purchased, Rainier View fixed the problem within 18 months by treating the water with chemicals to reduce its acidity. Rainier View reached an undisclosed out-of-court settlement with the residents just before the trial began last month, Yackulic

said.