

## ARSENIC AFFORDABILITY REPORT TO CONGRESS

In its FY 2002 Appropriations Report language, Congress directed the EPA to review the Agency's affordability criteria, and to review how small system variance and exemption programs should be implemented for the new arsenic in drinking water standard. The Congress also directed EPA to identify potential funding mechanisms that would help small communities comply with the new arsenic regulation. The March 2002 Agency report to Congress, "*Small System Arsenic Implementation Issues*", describes **three major activities** that address an Agency review of national-level affordability criteria for drinking water rules and small systems implementation issues related to the new arsenic in drinking water standard.

The three activities are:

- 1) **A Review of EPA's Small System Affordability Criteria and Variance Process.** The Report describes how EPA will examine and reconsider criteria for determining the affordability of EPA's drinking water rules, and review the small system variance process. This review will rely on consultations with EPA's Science Advisory Board, stakeholders, and the public.
- 2) **Small Community Drinking Water Assistance.** The Report describes how States and small systems may obtain financial and technical assistance, as well as training. To implement this activity, EPA will work with State Drinking Water State Revolving Fund administrators and the Rural Utilities Service.
- 3) **A \$20 million Commitment to Fund Research, Development and Technical Assistance.** The Report also describes how EPA will implement its \$20 million commitment to fund research, development and technical assistance activities that will help small systems comply with the new arsenic standard. This strategy focuses on five major areas related to arsenic treatment and compliance: 1) support for small business development of innovative treatment processes, 2) demonstration projects, 3) performance verification studies, 4) enhanced internal research, and 5) technical assistance and training.