

Water Lines

SDW Hotline Report

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Top Ten Topics

Topic	Questions (phone & e-mail)	Percent of Total* Questions
Local Drinking Water Quality	135	9
Tap Water Testing	125**	8
Coliforms	100	7
Non-EPA Environmental	70	5
Lead	66	4
Public Notification	65	4
Household Wells	60	4
Other EPA	57	4
Home Water Treatment Units	55	4
MCL List	51	3

*A total of 1,483 questions were answered by the Hotline (via telephone and e-mail) in December 2003.

**Citizens who obtain their drinking water from private household wells asked 21 percent of the tap water testing questions.

Calls	E-mails	Total***
932	200	1,132

***A single call or e-mail may generate multiple questions.

Published Monthly

See past reports at

<http://intranet.epa.gov/ow/hotline>

Safe Drinking Water Hotline: National Toll-free No.: (800) 426-4791

For More Information Contact:
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Operated by Booz Allen Hamilton
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What's New

New Publications:

- Water Supply Guidance: Memorandum on Applicability of the Safe Drinking Water Act to Submetered Properties, December 16, 2003, is now available at www.epa.gov/safewater/wsg/memo_wsg_submetering.pdf.
- Individual modules of the Response Protocol Toolbox: Planning for and Responding to Contamination Threats to Drinking Water Systems are now available at www.epa.gov/safewater/security/index.html or by contacting the Safe Drinking Water Hotline.
- Strategic Planning: A Handbook for Small Water Systems – One of the Simple Tools for Effective Performance (STEP) Guide Series (EPA816-R-03-015) is now available at www.epa.gov/safewater/smallsys/ssinfo.htm or by contacting the Safe Drinking Water Hotline.
- Support documents for the Contaminant Candidate List regulatory determinations are now available at www.epa.gov/safewater/ccl/cclregdetermine.html.

Calendar:

Who?	What?	Where?	When?	More Information
SAB	Face to Face Meeting with OW and ORD	Washington, DC	12/10/2003	For more information: www.epa.gov/sab
GWPC	UIC Conference	Houston, TX	1/20/2004 – 1/22/2004	
NDWAC	CCL Work Group	Washington, DC	1/22/2004 – 1/23/2004	
NDWA	CCL Work Group	Washington, DC	3/4/2004 – 3/5/2004	
ASDWA	Member Meeting	Alexandria, VA	3/17/2004 – 3/19/2004	
GWPC	Annual Policy Conference	Washington, DC	3/21/2004 – 3/23/2004	

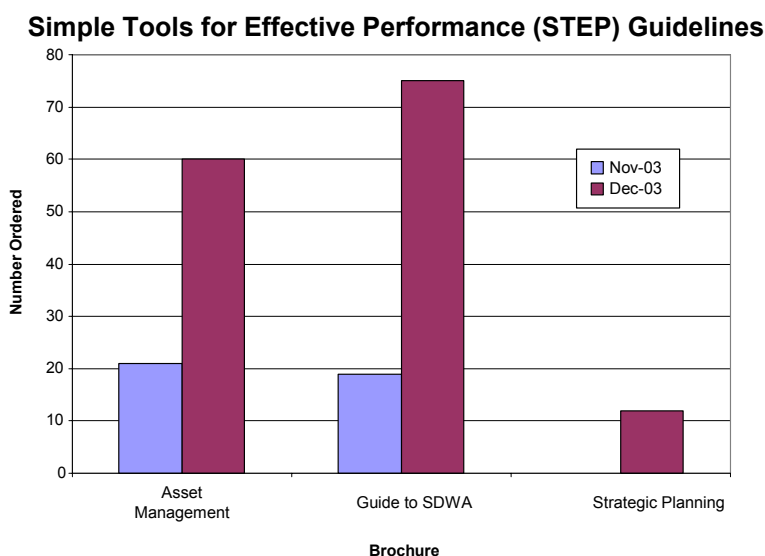
Did You Know?

Approximately 10-20 percent of the human exposure to lead is attributable to lead in drinking water.

(Environmental Protection Agency,
Office of Groundwater and Drinking Water)

Monthly Trends

The popularity of two recently published small system capacity-development documents can be seen by examining the number of each document ordered in the months of November and December 2003. The documents, entitled *Asset Management: A Handbook for Small Water Systems* (EPA816-R-03-016, September 2003), and *Small Systems Guide to Safe Drinking Water Act Regulations: The First STEP to Providing Safe and Reliable Drinking Water* (EPA816-R-03-017, September 2003), received almost three times the number of requests in December than in November (see chart below). Capacity development is a state effort to help drinking water systems improve their finances, management, infrastructure, and operations so they can provide safe drinking water consistently, reliably, and cost-effectively. A third small system capacity development document, *Strategic Planning: A Handbook for Small Water Systems -- One of the Simple Tools for Effective Performance (STEP) Guide Series* (EPA 816-R-03-015, September 2003), was posted on EPA's Office of Groundwater and Drinking Water Web site on December 15, 2003 but no orders were placed in November 2003.



Frequently Asked Qs & As

This section provides answers to frequently asked questions not necessarily represented in one of the Top Ten Topic categories.

Q: Why do public water systems flush water mains?

A: Flushing water mains removes sediments or other contaminants that can accumulate in pipes over time and lead to taste and odor problems. Flushing in dead-end lines can also improve disinfectant residual levels (*Guidance Manual for Conducting Sanitary Surveys of Public Water Systems; Surface Water and Ground Water Under the Direct Influence (GWUDI)*, (EPA815-R-99-016, April 1999). In addition to protecting water quality, regular flushing can help reduce corrosive conditions associated with biofilm growth that can often lead to pipeline leaks and breaks (*Potential Contamination*

Due to Cross-Connections and Backflow and the Associated Health Risks, August 13, 2002).

Q: Why is the maximum contaminant level (MCL) for asbestos in drinking water measured in terms of fibers greater than 10 micrometers in length?

A: EPA's standard of 7 million fibers/liter (for fibers greater than 10 micrometers in length) is based upon evidence of benign polyps occurring in male rats following oral administration of intermediate size chrysotile fibers (i.e., >10 micrometer range). The study did not indicate potential adverse health effects for short-range fibers (56 FR 3526, 3535; November 13, 1985).

Q: I tried to access my community water system's (CWS) water quality report online at the following URL: www.epa.gov/safewater/dwinfo.htm. The link to my community water system's online report is not

working properly. Can you provide access to the online version?

A: No. EPA is not responsible for the content or the accessibility of the CWS Web sites. Links to online versions of annual drinking water quality reports on EPA's Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water Web site are provided by community water suppliers. You may wish to contact your local water system to obtain a hard copy of the water quality report.

Q: Human consumption has been interpreted to include drinking, bathing, showering, cooking, dishwashing, and maintaining oral hygiene (*Water Supply Guidance Memo; Meaning of "Human Consumption" and "Graywater Uses" as it Relates to Public Water Systems*, August 1989). Under this interpretation, does the term "bathing" include swimming?

A: Bathing does not include swimming in an open canal or incidental contact with water from an open canal in connection with such activities as agricultural work, canal maintenance, or lawn and garden care. The term "bathing" means the use of water for personal hygiene purposes in a home, business setting, school, etc. (63 FR 41940, 41941; August 5, 1998).

Q: EPA recommends that action be taken to limit exposure or reduce lead in water whenever lead level concentrations in school drinking water exceeds 20 ppb (*Lead in School Drinking Water*, EPA570-9-89-001, January 1989). What is the rationale for the 20 ppb recommended level when the action level for public water systems is 15 ppb?

A: The two lead action levels differ because of the different problems they seek to detect and the different monitoring protocols used in the two situations. The 20 ppb action level and sampling protocol for lead in schools is designed to pinpoint specific water fountains and outlets that require remediation (e.g., water cooler replacement). The 15 ppb action level and sampling protocol is designed to identify system-wide problems and not problems in single outlets (56 FR 26460, 26479; June 7, 1991).

Q: A public water system (PWS) must collect total coliform repeat samples within 24-hours of being notified of the positive results unless the state grants an extension due to logistical sample collection

problems (40 CFR 141.21(b)(1)). How does EPA define logistical problem?

A: There is no regulatory definition of logistical problem. However, the June 29, 1989 Federal Register provides several examples of logistical problems that could prevent a PWS from collecting repeat samples within a 24-hour timeframe. These examples include the laboratories inability to ship empty sample bottles or receive water sample (54 FR 27544, 27554).

Q: Under a state's operator certification program, each community and nontransient noncommunity water system must be under the direct supervision of a certified operator. To become certified, water system operators must take and pass an examination (64 FR 5916, 5919; February 5, 1999). Is the state agency required to provide the certification exams in foreign languages (e.g., Spanish)?

A: According to Jenny Bielanski, OGWDW, EPA's operator certification guidelines do not require a state to or restrict a state from offering operator certification examinations in languages other than English. The decision is ultimately up to the state. A state may want to consider the following factors before offering an exam in a second language:

1. Ensure the candidate meets all of the requirements for certification (education and experience); passing the test is just one of the requirements.
2. If the candidate's normal form of communication is not English, consideration should be given to how the state will provide continuing education credits. Once an operator becomes certified, the operator must take training to renew certification as required by state law.
3. Does the state have personnel that can communicate with persons who may not speak English as a first language?
4. Would the community/population served by a water system benefit from an operator who is either bilingual or doesn't speak English as a first language?

Monthly Summary of Hotline Service

Total number of calls answered	932
Total number of e-mails received	200
Average wait time (in seconds)	0:31
Percent of calls satisfied immediately	99.9%
Percent of all calls answered in < 1 min	88%
Percent of callbacks answered in 5 days	100%
Percent of e-mails answered in 5 days	100%
Number of times callers were transferred to the WSC Wellcare Hotline	222
Number of times callers listened to recorded message about CCRs	232
Number of times callers listened to recorded message about local drinking water quality for PWS customers	212
Number of times callers listened to recorded message about tap water testing and quality for household well owners	118
Number of times callers listened to recorded message about tap water testing for PWS customers	225

Comparison to Previous Year

	Calls	E-mails
December 2003	932	200
December 2002	1,374	236

Top Ten Referrals

Inquiry Referred to:	Number of Referrals	Percent of Total* Referrals
1. EPA Internet	162	17
2. Local Water System	155	16
3. State PWSS	122	12
4. State Lab Certification	104	11
5. NSF/WQA/UL	75	8
6. AGWT/WSC	50	5
7. EPA Regions	45	5
8. Other Hotlines	40	4
9. Non-EPA Internet	39	4
10. Local Public Health	36	4

*A total of 979 referrals to other resources, agencies, and organizations were provided by the Hotline in December 2003.

Customer Profiles

Customer	Calls	E-mails
Analytical Laboratories	15	1
Citizen - Private Well	68	23
Citizen - PWS	500	76
Consultants/Industry/Trade (DW)	49	9
Consultants/Industry/Trade (Other)	61	16
Environmental Groups	0	1
EPA	12	1
Other Federal Agency	2	1
Government, Local	11	5
Government, State	21	9
Government, Tribal	0	1
Spanish Speaking	2	1
International	5	14
Media	4	1
Medical Professional	4	1
Public Water System	105	15
Schools/University	28	25
Other	45	0
TOTALS	932	200

Daily Call Data

	Total Calls Answered	Average Wait Time mm:sec
1-December	47	00:49
2-December	63	00:21
3-December	61	00:43
4-December	57	00:27
5-December	39	00:30
8-December	53	00:30
9-December	54	00:20
10-December	32	00:29
11-December	50	00:34
12-December	43	00:27
15-December	91	00:26
16-December	43	00:34
17-December	46	00:36
18-December	32	00:37
19-December	26	00:33
22-December	34	00:11
23-December	33	00:17
24-December	15	00:32
29-December	40	00:47
30-December	38	00:52
31-December	35	00:19
TOTALS	932	00:31

Topic Categories

Category	Calls	E-mails
Microbials/Disinfection Byproducts		
Chlorine	7	1
Coliforms	87	13
Cryptosporidium	12	1
Disinfection/Disinfection Byproducts (Other)	14	1
Disinfection – Home Water	6	1
Other Microbials	12	1
Storage – Home Water	2	1
Surface Water Treatment (SWTR, ESWTR, LT1FBR)	29	9
Trihalomethane (THM)	0	0
Inorganic Chemicals (IOC)/Synthetic Organic Chemicals (SOC)		
Arsenic	20	1
Fluoride	2	1
Methyl- <i>tertiary</i> -butyl-ether (MTBE)	5	0
Perchlorate	0	1
Phase I, II & V	12	7
Sodium Monitoring	2	0
Sulfate	0	0
Lead and Copper		
Copper	9	1
Lead	63	3
Lead Contamination Control Act (LCCA)/Lead Ban	3	0
Radionuclides		
Radionuclides (Other)	10	3
Radionuclides (Radon)	24	0
Secondary DW Regulations		
Secondary DW Regulations	22	7
SDWA Background/Overview		
Definitions & Applicability	20	5
MCL List	44	7
Other Background	32	13
SDWA	46	1

Category	Calls	E-mails
Water on Tap	13	2
Other DW Regulations		
Analytical Methods (DW)	12	4
Contaminant Candidate List/ Drinking Water Priority List	7	0
Consumer Confidence Report (DW)	45	4
DW Primacy (PWS)	1	0
Operator (PWS) Certification	5	1
Other Drinking Water Security	28	12
Public Notification (PWS)	64	1
Security Planning Grants	6	0
State Revolving Fund (DW)	1	1
Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR)	20	1
Other Drinking Water		
Additives Program	2	2
Bottled Water	18	12
Complaints about PWS	34	14
Compliance & Enforcement (PWS)	15	9
Home Water Treatment Units	44	11
Infrastructure/Cap. Development	18	1
Local DW Quality	117	18
Tap Water Testing	110	15
Treatment/BATs (DW)	9	9
Drinking Water Source Protection		
Ground Water Rule	3	2
Sole Source Aquifer	0	0
Source Water/Wellhead Protection	10	1
UIC Program	10	6
Out of Purview		
Household Wells	45	15
Non-Environmental	13	4
Non-EPA Environmental	36	34
Other EPA (Programs)	41	16
TOTALS	1,210	273

EPA DISCLAIMER

Answers to questions in the Safe Drinking Water Hotline monthly report are intended to be purely informational and are based on SDWA provisions, EPA regulations, guidance, and established policy effective at the time of publication. The answers given reflect EPA staff's best judgment at the time and do not represent a final or official EPA interpretation. This report does not substitute for the applicable provisions of statutes and regulations, guidance, etc., nor is it a regulation itself. Thus, it does not impose legally-binding requirements on EPA, States, or the regulated community. An answer to a question in this report may be revised at any time to reflect EPA's revisions to existing regulations, changes in EPA's approach to interpreting its regulations or statutory authority, or for other reasons. EPA may provide a different answer to a question in this report in the future.

Also, an answer provided in this report may not apply to a particular situation based upon the circumstances. Any decisions regarding a particular case will be made based on the applicable statutes and regulations. Therefore, interested parties are free to raise questions and objections about the appropriateness of the application of an answer in this report to a particular situation, and EPA will consider whether or not the recommendations or interpretations in the answer are accurate and appropriate in that situation. The information in this report is not intended, nor can it be relied upon, to create any rights enforceable by any party in litigation with the United States.

SAFE DRINKING WATER HOTLINE MONTHLY REPORT

December 2003

APPENDIX A: FEDERAL REGISTER SUMMARIES

NOTICES

**"Notice of Tentative Approval and Solicitation of Request for a Public Hearing for Public Water System Supervision Program Revisions for the State of Maryland"
December 9, 2003 (68 FR 68625)**

EPA gave notice of tentative approval that the State of Maryland has revised its Public Water Supervision Program by adopting revisions to the Public Notification Rule as well as minor revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule. If no hearing request or comments are received by January 8, 2004, the determination will become effective.

**"Fall 2003 Regulatory Agenda"
December 22, 2003 (68 FR 73540)**

EPA published the Semiannual Regulatory Agenda to update the public about regulations and major policies currently under development; reviews of existing regulations and major policies; and regulations and major policies completed or canceled since the last agenda.

**"Notice of Finalization of Revised Policy Regarding the Applicability of the Safe Drinking Water Act to Submetered Properties"
December 23, 2003 (68 FR 74233)**

EPA finalized a memorandum that outlined its revised policy regarding regulatory requirements under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) for submetered properties. Under SDWA section 1411, the national primary drinking water regulations apply to public water systems (PWS) that have their own water source, treat, or "sell" water. EPA staff and program managers have previously issued memoranda stating that any building or property owner who meets the definition of a PWS and receives water from a regulated public water system, but bills tenants separately for this water, is "selling" the water and therefore is independently subject to SDWA's drinking water requirements. As a way to promote full cost and conservation pricing to achieve water conservation, EPA is changing its interpretation of section 1411 as it applies to submetered properties. EPA believes that the addition of a submeter should not in any way change the quality of water provided to customers on these properties. In general, the scope of this policy is not intended to extend where the property in question has a large distribution system, serves a large population or serves a mixed (e.g., commercial/residential) population (e.g., many military installations/facilities or large mobile home parks).

**"Notice of Public Meetings of the Drinking Water Contaminant Candidate List Classification Process Work Group of the National Drinking Water Advisory Council"
December 31, 2003 (68 FR 75503)**

Notice was provided of the forthcoming meetings of the Drinking Water Contaminant Candidate List (CCL) Classification Process Work Group of the National Drinking Water Advisory Council (NDWAC), established under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). The dates for the

NDWAC CCL Work Group meetings will be as follows: January 22-23, 2004, and March 4-5, 2004. All meetings will be held from 9 AM-5 PM, Eastern Time on the first day, and 8 AM-3:30 PM, Eastern Time on the second day. All meetings of the CCL Work Group will be held at RESOLVE Inc., 1255 23rd Street, NW, Suite 275, Washington, DC.