

Milwaukee Water Works



Milwaukee's Future: IT'S IN OUR HANDS

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Advisory to Customers
March 23, 2010

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson on March 23 announced new policies the EPA is considering to regulate contaminants in drinking water [NY Times: U.S Bolsters Chemical Restrictions for Water](#).

The Water Research Foundation (WRF) praised the EPA for moving forward with a new regulatory approach to study and regulate groups of compounds versus individual compounds. The traditional approach to regulatory decision making includes developing standards, such as maximum contaminant levels (MCLs), for each compound versus types or groups of compounds. From a scientific standpoint, the WRF believes the latter approach will increase both the awareness and understanding of the range of chemicals in our water supply as well as improve our understanding of the occurrence, treatability, and health implications of trace levels of substances. Contrary to how the information is being reported in the news media, the new approach may also ultimately help contain treatment costs for utilities.

Jackson said the EPA will move to tighten limits on four specific contaminants that cause cancer, because scientific advancements allow them to be detected at lower levels. The compounds include:

- Tetrachloroethylene (PCE) used in textile industry and as a component of aerosol dry-cleaning products
- Trichloroethylene (TCE) used to remove grease from fabricated metal parts and some textiles
- Acrylamide used as a flocculant in treatment of sewage, waste and drinking water. It also is used in production of organic chemicals, synthesis of dyes, sizing of paper and textiles.
- Epichlorohydrin used to make glycerin and other polymers and plastics. Used in paper and drug industries as an insect fumigant.

The EPA did not release potential new limits on the compounds, though in a proposal posted on the EPA Web site, the agency suggested it could feasibly reduce the amount of TCE in water to one-tenth of current levels.

The Milwaukee Water Works is already testing for three of the four contaminants, and is setting up to test for Acrylamide. The tests are made of Lake Michigan source water and treated water. The compounds have not been found in these tests.

Milwaukee's comprehensive water quality monitoring is done to understand water quality, to collect baseline data for study, to be in a position to take additional action if needed, and to meet future regulations. Milwaukee drinking water continues to meet all state and federal health standards for drinking water.

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Safe, Abundant Drinking Water.