



## ENVIRONMENTAL AND PUBLIC PROTECTION CABINET

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### **The Drinking Water Program: An Overview**

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the Public Water System Supervision (PWSS) Program under the authority of the 1974 Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). Under the SDWA and the 1986 Amendments, EPA sets national limits on contaminant levels in drinking water to ensure that the water is safe for human consumption. These limits are known as Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) and the Maximum Residual Disinfectant Levels (MRDLs). For some regulations, EPA establishes treatment techniques in lieu of an MCL to control unacceptable levels of contaminants in water. The agency also regulates how often public water systems (PWSs) monitor their water for contaminants and report the monitoring results to the states or EPA. Generally, the larger the population served by a water system, the more frequent the monitoring and reporting (M/R) requirements. In addition, EPA requires PWSs to monitor for unregulated contaminants to provide data for future regulatory development. Finally, EPA requires PWSs to notify their consumers when they have violated these regulations. The 1996 Amendments to the SDWA require consumer notification to include a clear and understandable explanation of the nature of the violation, its potential adverse health effects; steps that the PWS is undertaking to correct the violation and the possibility of alternative water supplies during the violation.

The SDWA applies to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Indian Lands, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The SDWA allows states and territories to seek EPA approval to administer their own PWSS Programs. The authority to run a PWSS Program is called primacy. For a state to receive primacy, EPA must determine that the state meets certain requirements laid out in the SDWA and the regulations, including the adoption of drinking water regulations that are at least as stringent as the Federal regulations and a demonstration that they can enforce the program requirements. Of the 56 states and territories, all but Wyoming and the District of Columbia have primacy. The EPA Regional Offices administer the PWSS Programs within these two jurisdictions.

The 1986 SDWA Amendments gave Indian Tribes the right to apply for and receive primacy. The EPA currently administers PWSS Programs on all Indian lands except the Navaho Nation, which was granted primacy in late 2000.

## **Annual State PWS Report**

Each quarter, primacy states submit data to the Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS/FED), an automated database maintained by EPA. The data submitted include, but are not limited to, PWS inventory information, the incidence of Maximum Contaminant Level, Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level, monitoring, and treatment technique violations; and information on enforcement activity related to these violations. Section 1414(c) (3) of the Safe Drinking Water Act requires states to provide EPA with an annual report of violations of the primary drinking water standards. This report provides the numbers of violations in each of six categories: MCLs, MRDLs treatment techniques, variances and exemptions, significant monitoring violations, and significant consumer notification violations. The EPA Regional Offices report the information for Wyoming, the District of Columbia, and all Indian Lands but the Navaho Nation. EPA Regional offices also report Federal enforcement actions taken. Data retrieved from SDWIS/FED form the basis of this report.

### **Public Water System**

A Public Water System (PWS) is defined as a system that provides water via piping or other constructed conveyances for human consumption to at least 15 service connections or serves an average of at least 25 people for at least 60 days each year. There are three types of PWSs. PWSs can be community (such as towns), nontransient noncommunity (such as schools or factories), or transient noncommunity systems (such as rest stops or parks). For this report, when the acronym PWS is used it means systems of all types unless specified in greater detail.

### **Maximum Contaminant Level**

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), the EPA sets national limits on contaminant levels in drinking water to ensure that the water is safe for human consumption. These limits are known as Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs).

### **Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level**

The EPA sets national limits on residual disinfectant levels in drinking water to reduce the risk of exposure to disinfectant byproducts formed, when public water systems add chemical disinfectant for either primary or residual treatment. These limits are known as Maximum Residual Disinfectant Levels (MRDLs).

### **Treatment Techniques**

For some regulations, the EPA establishes treatment techniques (TTs) in lieu of an MCL to control unacceptable levels of certain contaminants. For example, treatment techniques have been established for viruses, some bacteria, and turbidity.

## **Monitoring**

A PWS is required to monitor and verify that the levels of contaminants present in the water do not exceed the MCL. If a PWS fails to have its water tested as required or fails to report test results correctly to the primacy agent, a monitoring violation occurs.

### **Monitoring Violations**

For this report, significant monitoring violations are generally defined as any monitoring violation that occurred during the calendar year of the report. A monitoring violation, with rare exceptions, occurs when no samples were taken or no results were reported or reported incorrectly during a compliance period.

### **Consumer Notification**

Every Community Water System is required to deliver to its customers a brief annual water quality report. This report is to include some educational material, and will provide information on the source water, the levels of any detected contaminants, and compliance with drinking water regulations.

### **Consumer Notification Violations**

For this report, a public notification violation occurred if a community water system completely failed to provide its customers the required annual water quality report or the report provided is incorrect.

## **OBTAINING COPY OF 2014 PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS REPORT**

As required by the Safe Drinking Water Act, Kentucky has made the 2014 Public Water Systems report available to public. Interested individuals can obtain a copy of the 2014 Annual Public Water Systems Report for Kentucky on our website at:

<http://water.ky.gov/DrinkingWater/Pages/AnnualComplianceReports.aspx>

For more information please contact Brian Chitti at (502) 564 -3410