



Enforcement Alert

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Community Water Systems Required to Provide Consumers Annual 'Right-to-Know' Report on Drinking Water Quality by July 1, 2001

The July 1, 2001, deadline is nearing quickly for community water systems (CWSs) to provide customers the required annual report intended to educate them about the quality of their

drinking water and opportunities to participate in its protection.

The "Consumer Confidence Report" (CCR) rule is a public right-to-know regulation developed pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water Act. Through this regulation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires community water suppliers to provide annual reports on the quality of their drinking water to enable Americans to make practical, knowledgeable decisions about their health and their environment.

The rule affects 54,000 water systems, and the information in the reports reaches some 264 million people nationwide.

EPA's goal is to achieve 100 percent compliance with the CCR regulation so that all Americans have important information concerning the source of their water and what is in it.

EPA Compliance and Enforcement Actions

EPA is continuing to provide outreach and assistance to community water systems on the rule's requirements. In addition to distributing informational materials to all community water systems and providing a manual on how to develop the Consumer Confidence Report, EPA created an electronic template to help systems prepare their CCRs and designed a comprehensive website for CCR information (see page 3, "Useful Compliance Assistance Resources").



The Consumer Confidence Report is intended to reach some 264 million Americans (U.S. EPA photograph).

States, environmental groups and water associations also are doing their part to educate water systems by providing guidance and workshops regarding the development and delivery of these important water quality reports.

Moreover, EPA continues to assist states in their efforts to implement the CCR rule. The CCR regulation sets baseline standards to ensure that all consumers receive reports that contain comparable water quality information,

About Enforcement Alert

Enforcement Alert is published periodically by the Office of Regulatory Enforcement to inform and educate the public and regulated community of important environmental enforcement issues, recent trends and significant enforcement actions.

This information should help the regulated community anticipate and prevent violations of federal environmental law that could otherwise lead to enforcement action. Reproduction and wide dissemination of this publication are encouraged.

For information on obtaining additional copies of this publication, contact the editor listed below.

Eric V. Schaeffer
Director, Office of
Regulatory Enforcement

Editor: Virginia Bueno
(202) 564-8684
bueno.virginia@epa.gov
(Please email address and
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Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

but states may have more stringent requirements.

According to EPA data, 92 percent of the nation's community water systems distributed water quality reports to their customers by the first deadline (Oct. 19, 1999), and last year, EPA reported similar compliance rates for the second deadline (July 1, 2000).

To ensure that all community water systems provide reports to the public, the Agency and states are taking enforcement actions such as issuing compliance orders and imposing civil penalties against those water suppliers that have not complied with the CCR requirement.

Required Information in the Consumer Confidence Report

All community water systems (CWS) are required to produce and distribute a CCR. Regulations define a community water system as a system that serves at least 15 service connections used by year-round residents or regularly serves at least 25 year-round residents.

A CWS that sells water to another CWS must provide the buying system with monitoring results and other CCR-required water quality information by April 1 annually or by a mutually agreeable date reduced to contract.

While water systems are free to enhance their reports in any useful way, each report must provide consumers with the following fundamental information about their drinking water:

- The source and type of drinking water and the commonly used name and location of the drinking water system;
- A brief summary of the susceptibility to contamination of the local drinking water source, based on the source water assessments that states must complete by 2003;
- Instructions on how to get a copy of the water system's complete source water assessment;
- The level (or range of levels) of any regulated contaminant detected in local drinking water, as well as EPA's health-based standard (maximum contaminant level) for comparison;



EPA regulations (40 CFR Section 141.2) define a community water system as a system that serves at least 15 service connections used by year-round residents or regularly serves at least 25 year-round residents (*U.S. EPA illustration*).

- Likely sources of that contaminant in the local drinking water supply;
- A clear, readily understandable explanation of any drinking water violations including the length of the violation, potential health effects of any contaminant detected above the health standard and actions taken by the CWS to address the violation;
- Additional information about Cryptosporidium and radon if these contaminants are detected;
- Educational statements on nitrate, arsenic, and lead, if these contaminants are detected at certain levels; and
- Phone numbers of additional sources of information, including the water system and EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.

The CCR is not the primary notification of potential health risks posed by drinking water but will provide customers with an annual overview of their drinking water quality.

Source Water Assessments

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act states are required by 2003 to develop comprehensive Source Water Assessment Programs (SWAP) that will identify the areas that supply public tap water; inventory contaminants and assess water system susceptibility to contamination; inform the public of the results. EPA is responsible for the review and approval of state SWAPs.

Funds to perform the assessments were provided through a specific set-aside in the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF).

For guidance on this requirement, see EPA's State Source Water Assessment and Protection Programs website (<http://www.epa.gov/safewater>). The guidance layouts information that states need to provide about their program before approval, public participation requirements, and funding available through the 1997 DWSRF.

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

Report Delivery, Certification, and Recordkeeping Requirements

■ Large water systems, which serve more than 10,000 people, must mail water quality reports to their customers, either with water bills or as a separate mailing, and take steps to get the information to people who do not receive water bills.

■ Systems serving 100,000 or more must post their reports on the Internet, in addition to other delivery mechanisms, to make the CCRs easily accessible to all consumers.

■ Small water systems may be able to distribute the information through newspapers or by other means with the approval of the state governor or his/her designee. EPA is working with smaller systems to get these reports online.

■ All systems must make the report available upon request.

■ CWSs must send a copy of their CCR to the primacy agent, either

Interested in seeing other drinking water quality reports?

EPA has compiled a online catalog of links to reports at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/ccr1.html>. Water suppliers of all sizes have provided their reports online so that their citizens can have easy access to important water quality information.

the state or EPA, by the July 1, 2001, deadline.

■ Within three months of the report deadline (by Oct. 1, 2001), the CWSs must submit a certification to the primacy agent certifying that the report was distributed to all customers and that the information contained in the CCR was correct.

CWSs must retain copies of their CCRs for at least three years and make them available to the public upon request.

Drinking water suppliers seeking additional information about this rule should visit EPA's drinking water web

site at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/ccr1.html> or call the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.

For more information, contact Cassandra Rice, Office of Regulatory Enforcement, Water Enforcement Division at (202) 564-4057, or Email: rice.cassandra@epa.gov.

Useful Compliance Assistance Resources

Water Enforcement Division:
<http://www.epa.gov/oeca/ore/water>

Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water:
<http://www.epa.gov/safewater>

Safe Drinking Water Hotline:
1-800-426-4791

Consumer Confidence Reports:
<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/ccr1.html>

Annual Drinking water Quality Reports:
<http://yosemite.epa.gov/ogwdw/ccr.nsf/America?OpenView>

Protocol for Conducting Environmental Compliance Audits of Public Water Systems under SDWA:
<http://www.epa.gov/oeca/main/strategy/sdwafina.pdf>

Drinking Water Standards Program:
<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/standards.html>

Safe Drinking Water Act:
<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/sdwa/sdwa.html>

Audit Policy Information:
<http://www.epa.gov/oeca/ore/apolguid.html>

Compliance Assistance Centers:
<http://www.epa.gov/oeca/mfcac.html>

Small Business Gateway:
http://www.epa.gov/smallbusiness/major_environmental_laws.htm

New Electronic Information Service

EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance now offers an email, subscription-based information service called "OCORELINK." Subscribers to this electronic service (known as a "listserv") will receive periodic news and information about Office of Compliance products and compliance trends designed to help the regulated community meet its compliance requirements. You'll also receive important information from the Office of Regulatory Enforcement on enforcement issues, recent trends and significant enforcement actions, and will be notified when issues of its newsletters, *Enforcement Alert* and the *Audit Policy Update*, have been posted on the web.

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Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Regulatory Enforcement
(2248A)
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

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