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The Authoritative Resource on Safe Water®

Public Affairs Advisory

**TO: AWWA Leadership
All Utilities**

FROM: AWWA Public Affairs

DATE: May 15, 2008

Who:	Water Utilities
What:	Talking about Pharmaceuticals with Customers

The American Water Works Association (AWWA) recognizes the critical importance and multiple benefits of clear and timely communication with customers, meaningful involvement by community members and stakeholders, and proactive, frank information-sharing regarding water quality and service. To that end, AWWA is providing the following messages for utilities who wish to proactively communicate with their communities following recent media reports on the detection of pharmaceutical compounds in municipal drinking water supplies.

Neither testing for pharmaceutical compounds nor disclosure of results from voluntary testing for these compounds is currently required under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Despite the fact that these compounds are not regulated in drinking water—and there are no established monitoring requirements, standard detection methods or even a list of recommended sentinel contaminants — utilities' monitoring and disclosure policies are likely to come under increased scrutiny.

AWWA advises that utilities that test for pharmaceuticals disclose results as they become known. Raw data does little to illuminate risk, of course, so the data should be accompanied by information that brings some perspective for customers. For example, it may be helpful to include a statement indicating that science has not demonstrated an impact on human health at the trace levels these compounds are being discovered. AWWA also recommends collaborating closely with local public health officials to ensure consistent, accurate messages related to this issue.

Note: AWWA's broader talking points on pharmaceuticals were distributed to utility members prior to the recent news reports on the subject. For resends, please contact Bianca McCullough, bmccullough@awwa.org. A link to AWWA's consumer information on pharmaceuticals in drinking water can be found on the front page of www.drinktap.org.

Please contact us at gkail@awwa.org, 303-734-3410, or bmcullough@awwa.org, 303-734-3599, for more information.

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Suggested Messages for Utility when Communicating about Testing for Pharmaceuticals in Drinking Water

With the issue of pharmaceuticals in drinking water on the minds of some customers, utilities may want to provide information about testing in their consumer confidence reports, on web sites, or in other communications pieces. For the purposes of message development, utilities may be sorted into three groups:

1. Have not conducted testing for pharmaceutical compounds in drinking water
2. Have conducted testing for pharmaceutical compounds in drinking water with NO detections
3. Have conducted testing for pharmaceutical compounds in drinking water WITH detections

Each of these groups requires different messaging, based upon the questions that naturally occur to media and customers. Suggested messages are listed under each group below.

No Testing

- Protecting the health of our customers is our mission. While we understand that pharmaceuticals are an issue of interest, to date research has not demonstrated an impact on human health from pharmaceutical compounds at the trace levels discovered in drinking water.
- Our utility conducts more than XXX thousand analyses every year to ensure the water we provide meets or surpasses Safe Drinking Water Act standards, which were created to protect customers.
- Unfortunately there is no “blanket” water test, and there are literally tens of thousands of individual compounds for which we could search.
- With the absence of any known health benefit and given the amount of resources required to conduct tests for pharmaceutical compounds, we have chosen not to conduct these tests in our community at this time.
- We will continue to work closely with others in the drinking water community to advance the science and understanding of this issue and will take whatever steps are necessary to protect the health of our customers.

Testing – NO Detections

- Protecting the health of our customers is our mission. While we understand that pharmaceuticals are an issue of interest, to date research has not demonstrated an impact on

human health from pharmaceutical compounds at the trace levels discovered in drinking water.

- Although there are no health-based limits for pharmaceutical compounds in drinking water, XXX went above and beyond drinking water regulations to see what, if any, pharmaceuticals occur in our water. We conducted this research to better understand our water quality and to be in the best position to take additional action if needed.
- We are happy to report that we did not detect any pharmaceutical compounds in our tests, which have the ability to find these compounds at levels as low as parts per trillion—the equivalent of a ½-teaspoon of salt in 1,000 Olympic-size swimming pools.
- We looked for compounds based upon their likelihood to occur in water supplies, so they would serve as a “sentinel” for other compounds.
- We will continue to work closely with others in the drinking water industry to increase our understanding of this issue and will take whatever steps are necessary to continue to protect the health of our customers.

Testing – WITH Detections

- Protecting the health of our customers is our mission. While we understand that pharmaceuticals are an issue of interest, to date research has not demonstrated an impact on human health from pharmaceutical compounds at the trace levels discovered in drinking water.
- Although there are no health-based limits for pharmaceutical compounds in drinking water, XXX went above and beyond drinking water regulations to see what, if any, pharmaceuticals occur in our water. We conducted this research to better understand our water quality and to be in the best position to take additional action if needed.
- Using cutting-edge analytical instruments, scientists detected XX compounds at almost indescribably low levels. For a list of these compounds and the concentrations in which they were found in the water, visit {your utility website}.
- These compounds were found at levels as low as parts per trillion—the equivalent of a ½-teaspoon of salt in 1,000 Olympic-size swimming pools.
- As analytical methods improve, these compounds are being found at very low levels. However, the fact that a substance is detectable does not mean the substance is harmful to humans. To date, research has not demonstrated an impact on human health from the tiny amount of pharmaceutical compounds detected in drinking water.
- We will continue to work closely with others in the drinking water industry to increase our understanding of this issue and will take whatever steps are necessary to continue to protect the health of our customers.

Outreach Tools

Consumer Confidence Report -- Including information about pharmaceutical testing and results in the annual water quality report will demonstrate the utility’s commitment to full disclosure. Additionally, research has indicated that revealing this type of information in a factual, clear way

actually increases public confidence in the utility. Consumer Confidence Reports were created expressly to share information about drinking water quality, so they are an ideal vehicle for conveying information about pharmaceutical compounds and other water quality issues.

Bill Inserts – Utilities may want to consider a bill insert that carries an article related to “beyond-the-regulations” monitoring. This approach positions the utility as proactive and reassures customers that it is doing more than the bare minimum. The article might include why the monitoring was conducted and what, if any, compounds were detected, along with (if applicable) the relative concentration compared with a clinical dose.

Website – If you have tested for pharmaceuticals in drinking water, your utility website is a good place to share that information. If you’re listing the concentrations of specific contaminants, consider including information about the number of glasses of water you would have to drink in order to consume the equivalent of a single tablet or dose.

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