



****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****
March 11, 2008

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AMWA Discusses Pharmaceuticals in Water Supplies

Statement by Diane VanDe Hei, Executive Director, Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies:

Pharmaceutical residues found in our water supplies are a concern that metropolitan drinking water utilities take very seriously. While the scientific community does not yet know of any human health effects from trace amounts of these chemicals, the water sector is committed to finding out. Drinking water providers work closely with public health specialists, and consumers with health-related questions should contact their local health departments or their doctors.

Recognizing that consumers need information to make personal choices and water utilities need data to make informed decisions on treatment options, the water sector has not waited for U.S. EPA or FDA to address pharmaceuticals found in water. Our attention to this issue is demonstrated by the ongoing work of water research organizations and through proactive monitoring carried out by water utilities. The media has been proactive, too, by reporting on this subject for a decade or more.

Water treatment significantly reduces the concentration of pharmaceuticals in water, but water suppliers have made a priority of learning more about removing trace amounts that may be found after treatment.

The solution to this problem does not end with advancements in water treatment, however. We also need to be protecting the environment and our sources of drinking water. A comprehensive solution requires the collective effort of the federal government, animal feeding and production operations, water utilities and consumers.

Here are some recommendations of the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies:

- AMWA strongly encourages U.S. EPA to make research into treatment technologies a high priority.
- U.S. EPA and FDA must address whether the presence of trace amounts of pharmaceuticals result in short-term or long-term effects on human health and how such chemicals affect the environment.
- Water utilities should take steps to keep their consumers informed of their efforts to monitor and remove pharmaceuticals from water sources. Just as water utilities need data to make informed decisions, we believe that consumers should have the information they need to make personal health decisions.
- Animal feeding and production operations should endeavor to reduce their contributions of antibiotics and steroids into water supplies, and that industry should drop its efforts to seek liability exemptions from federal hazardous waste laws.
- The federal government should take the lead in developing a national program to provide consumers with an easy way to dispose of unused prescriptions. Likewise, the government should revise federal guidelines that currently encourage consumers to flush certain unused prescriptions down the sewer system.

In the meantime, the water sector will continue to invest in research and work with the public, the public health community and the federal government to ensure that the needed research is conducted. The sector will also continue to work with citizens and pharmacies to expand disposal programs that can have an immediate impact on source water quality.

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The Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies is an organization of the largest publicly owned drinking water suppliers in the United States.

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