



**American Water Works  
Association**

## Utility Member Benefit

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## Public Affairs Advisory

**TO: AWWA Member Utilities**

**FROM: AWWA Public Affairs**

**DATE: January 7, 2011**

<b>Who:</b>	<b>Water Utility Managers and Communications Personnel</b>
<b>What:</b>	<b>Media inquiries related to fluoridation announcement</b>
<b>When:</b>	<b>Today</b>

Today's announcement from the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) regarding community water fluoridation is likely to prompt local media inquiries and possibly activity from advocates opposed to fluoride in water.

The HHS/USEPA announcement and related information can be found here:

<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2011pres/01/20110107a.html>

Below are just a few samples of widely distributed news stories thus far today:

The Associated Press

[http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5geP\\_RsZOSef5LcVQ0f7vktgaSn7w?docId=03330968c9764f218238eb3f321b90b2](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5geP_RsZOSef5LcVQ0f7vktgaSn7w?docId=03330968c9764f218238eb3f321b90b2)

CBS News

[http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504763\\_162-20027755-10391704.html](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504763_162-20027755-10391704.html)

Reuters

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKTRE7064CM20110107>

AWWA issued a statement this morning which can be found here:

<http://www.awwa.org/files/GovtPublicAffairs/PressReleases/010711FluorideAWWAStatement.pdf>

Because fluoride is both regulated as a naturally occurring contaminant and sometimes added to benefit public health, today's announcement has the potential to create confusion in the public conversation. It is important to note each agency's role:

- It is HHS's role to provide guidance on which level of fluoride in drinking water is optimal for public health.
- It is EPA's role is to limit the maximum level of fluoride allowed.

The announcement has two major elements:

1. HHS proposes to reduce the recommended level of fluoride in drinking water to the low end of the current optimal range (.7 ppm). The health risk the HHS recommendation addresses by

lowering the optimal level of fluoridation is dental fluorosis. HHS reports that dental fluorosis appears mostly in its mild form in the United States, which is described as “barely visible lacy white markings or spots” on teeth. Severe dental fluorosis, which includes staining and pitting of teeth, is rare in the United States. Dental fluorosis occurs during years in which teeth are forming, ages 8 and younger.

2. EPA announced that it will begin a review of the maximum contaminant level (MCL) for fluoride drinking water.

The HHS notice of the proposed recommendation will be published in the Federal Register and HHS will accept comments for 30 days at [CWFcomments@cdc.gov](mailto:CWFcomments@cdc.gov). AWWA will keep utilities updated on related developments.

Due to the wide distribution of this story, AWWA Public Affairs recommends that utilities communicate and coordinate with their local public health agencies in responding to the announcement. Proactive communications with media are advised to assure that the messages customers receive are accurate and balanced. Below are some suggested talking points to assist you in addressing media:

### **Suggested Utility Talking Points Related to HHS/EPA fluoride announcement**

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the American Dental Association and other leading public health authorities continue to recommend optimal community water fluoridation as a significant health benefit. [Utility Name] has added fluoride since [year] to reduce the incidence of tooth decay in our community.
- The goal of community water fluoridation is to achieve the desired oral health benefit while minimizing potential health risks. That is why water providers undergo thorough and extensive training to safely apply fluoride in the amount recommended by the world’s most respected public health authorities.
- The proposed recommendations properly take into account new scientific data and recognize that water is now one of many sources of fluoride.
- We add fluoride [if true] in the amount recommended by the leading health authorities and in a manner consistent with established best practices.
- [Utility Name] is aware of the proposed HHS recommendations and will review our processes in light of the final recommendation. We will also pay close attention to regulatory developments and stand ready to respond.

#### **Other helpful resources**

Background on HHS proposed recommendation

[http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2011pres/01/pre\\_pub\\_frn\\_fluoride.html](http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2011pres/01/pre_pub_frn_fluoride.html)

American Dental Association statement

<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/ada-applauds-hhs-action-on-recommended-fluoride-level-in-drinking-water-113071524.html>

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) information on fluoridation  
<http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/index.htm>

AWWA Fluoride Resources

<http://www.awwa.org/Resources/topicspecific.cfm?ItemNumber=30949&navItemNumber=32970>

DC on Tap blog entry from AWWA Deputy Executive Director Tom Curtis

<http://www.awwa.org/Government/DConTapPost.cfm?ItemNumber=55970>

Drinktap.org Consumer Information on Fluoridation

<http://www.drinktap.org/consumerdnn/Home/WaterInformation/Fluoridation/tabid/184/Default.aspx>

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