



**American Water Works  
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The Authoritative Resource on Safe Water®

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## Public Affairs Advisory

**TO: AWWA Leadership  
All Utilities**

**FROM: AWWA Public Affairs**

**DATE: March 2, 2010**

<b>Who:</b>	<b>University of California, Berkley</b>
<b>What:</b>	<b>Study on atrazine and frog gender</b>
<b>When:</b>	<b>Released March 1</b>

Biologists from the University of California, Berkeley, yesterday publicly announced a study which, according to the researchers, shows atrazine is impacting the ability of frogs to reproduce and may be a cause of declining amphibian populations across the globe.

The study was widely promoted through an embargoed press release and has generated news stories in the Washington Post (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/01/AR2010030102331.html?hpid=topnews>), USA Today ([http://www.usatoday.com/tech/science/2010-03-02-1Aatrazine02\\_ST\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/tech/science/2010-03-02-1Aatrazine02_ST_N.htm)), Reuters and many other news outlets.

Utilities, particularly in communities where atrazine is used, should be prepared to respond to questions that may arise in local media.

The results of the study are in this week's online early edition of the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* <http://www.pnas.org/>.

During the past year, atrazine has also been the subject of criticism from the environmental advocacy group Natural Resources Defense Council <http://www.nrdc.org/health/atrazine/default.asp> and was also featured in the first installment of the New York Times' "Toxic Waters" series. [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/23/us/23water.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/23/us/23water.html?_r=1)

The attached talking points are provided to help utilities respond to media inquiries.

## SUGGESTED UTILITY TALKING POINTS ON ATRAZINE

- Atrazine is an herbicide widely used on a number of crops, primarily on corn and soybeans. It typically enters surface waters, like rivers, after a late spring or early summer rainstorm or when agricultural irrigation water containing it drains into them.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) established a Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for atrazine in 1991 at 3 ppb, with compliance based on an annual average of quarterly samples. During 2008 and 2009, none of more than 51,000 community water systems in the United States reported violations of the atrazine MCL.
- Atrazine has recently been associated with causing imbalances in hormone levels in laboratory animals, possibly disrupting reproductive and developmental processes on a short-term basis. Following a 2002 risk assessment, EPA reported that atrazine is not likely to be carcinogenic to humans.
- USEPA is currently reviewing the ecological and human health effects data associated with atrazine. The agency is convening a series of Science Advisory Panel meetings as well as conducting its own analysis to determine whether a change in the current regulatory position on atrazine is appropriate. Based on this evaluation, USEPA will decide whether to revise its current atrazine risk assessments and whether new restrictions are necessary.
- Our drinking water meets all current federal and state regulations for atrazine. We are paying close attention to the research in this area and will take immediate action to address any future concerns.
- Information on atrazine and other potential contaminants is included in our utility's annual water quality reports, which are delivered to every customer each year and also available at [include web address here].
- The best and most cost-effective way to keep our drinking water clean is to protect our precious source waters from contamination. We should all work for policies that protect our water and keep it clean, safe and plentiful.