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The Authoritative Resource on Safe Water®

Public Affairs Advisory

TO: All Utilities

FROM: AWWA Public Affairs

DATE: May 7, 2010

<p>Who: President's Cancer Panel</p> <p>What: Report on environmental cancer risks</p> <p>When: Released Thursday</p>
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Drinking water utilities should be aware of a report released yesterday by the President's Cancer Panel that calls for greater regulation of potential carcinogens in the environment and, among other recommendations, suggests that consumers "filter" their tap water at home.

See a summary at CNN.com:

<http://pagingdrgupta.blogs.cnn.com/2010/05/06/presidential-panel-cancer-risks-underestimated/>

The report, available at http://deainfo.nci.nih.gov/advisory/pcp/pcp08-09rpt/PCP_Report_08-09_508.pdf, is likely to be referenced in local media reports and by some home treatment device manufacturers.

In articles in USA Today and WebMD, a spokesman from the American Cancer Society criticized the report, saying it "does not reflect scientific consensus" and elevates "one side of a scientific debate that has continued for almost 30 years."

The President's Cancer Panel consists of three members who monitor "the development and execution of the activities of the National Cancer Program," reporting directly to the President. <http://deainfo.nci.nih.gov/advisory/pcp/pcpchr.htm>

While drinking water is only one route of exposure to potential carcinogens referenced in the report, water utility managers and spokespersons should be prepared for inquiries resulting from it. To assist you, AWWA provides the following talking points:

Suggested Talking Points on President's Cancer Panel Report

- We take seriously our obligation to protect public health by providing safe and reliable drinking water to our community. We also share the President's Cancer Panel's goal to reduce exposure to potential carcinogens in the environment.
- We support the panel's recommendation to properly dispose of pharmaceuticals and household products as a means of protecting our source waters. [Provide local information.]
- EPA and the drinking water community maintain an active research agenda to identify and manage public health risks. Under the Safe Drinking Water Act, EPA regulates contaminants when health effects and occurrence data support effective risk reduction. This is a sound scientific approach.
- We invite consumers to contact us to understand more about the quality and treatment of their drinking water from source to tap. We provide an annual consumer confidence report that details water quality, and it is also posted at [web address if posted]. Last year, our drinking water met all of EPA's high standards for safety [if accurate].
- The panel's broad recommendation to consumers to "filter tap water" would benefit from further explanation. Home treatment devices differ in their technologies and in their effectiveness at removing potential contaminants.
- We believe consumers should strive to make informed decisions when it comes to their tap water. If you choose to invest in a home treatment system, make sure that device is certified to accomplish what you want it to accomplish. We recommend using NSF-certified products if you choose to purchase a home treatment device.
- If you do use supplemental water treatment at home, closely follow the manufacturer's instructions for maintaining the device.
- If you do not receive your water from a community water system, you should have it tested regularly by a certified laboratory – at least once a year – to assure that it is safe to drink and has not been compromised by pollution in the environment. Information on private wells can be found on US EPA's web site at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/privatewells/index2.html>

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