



**American Water Works  
Association**

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The Authoritative Resource on Safe Water<sup>®</sup>

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## **Public Affairs Advisory**

**TO: AWWA Member Utilities**

**FROM: AWWA Public Affairs**

**DATE: June 21, 2011**

<b>Who:</b>	<b>Associated Press</b>
<b>What:</b>	<b>Article on water contamination from nuclear facilities</b>
<b>When:</b>	<b>Today</b>

Water utilities should be prepared for possible inquiries stemming from a widely distributed Associated Press story which reports that radioactive tritium leaking from corroded pipes at nuclear power sites has contaminated groundwater at multiple locations in the United States.

Read the entire story here: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2011/06/21/national/a000110D07.DTL#ixzz1PvbtbrvT>

The story points out that none of the contamination has reached public water supplies and reports that “So far, federal and industry officials say, the tritium leaks pose no health threat.” However, the article may generate headlines and TV and radio reports that raise concerns among consumers. For example, the Chicago Sun-Times’ headline today simply read: “Tritium leaking into water”.

The article is the second in a series from the “AP Impact” team which is critical of safety standards at nuclear facilities.

Tritium exists naturally in very low concentrations. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, other potential sources of tritium include commercial nuclear reactors and research reactors, and government weapons production plants. Monitoring requirements for tritium vary based upon a utility’s proximity to potential sources of contamination. USEPA carries a Q&A on tritium at:

<http://www.epa.gov/rpdweb00/radionuclides/tritium.html#epadoing>

Information on the Radionuclides Rule is available at:

<http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/rulesregs/sdwa/radionuclides/basicinformation.cfm>

### Suggested Utility Talking Points

- Our source water supplies are precious, and we should all be concerned when there is evidence of contamination. [Our utility] takes steps to protect our [aquifer /watersheds], including [provide examples].
- The report by the Associated Press points out that none of the identified tritium leaks have contaminated public water supplies.
- Our community's source water is not in an area where tritium is a contamination threat.

or

- Due to our proximity to [facility], our utility is required to perform monitoring for radioactive contamination to ensure the safety of our water.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends that private well owners have their water tested by a certified laboratory at least once a year. Private well owners should be aware of any activities in the area that may impact water quality.

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