



**American Water Works  
Association**

## Utility Member Benefit

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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: December 8, 2009**

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|--------------|--|
| <b>Who:</b>  | <b>NY Times / Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works</b>           |
| <b>What:</b> | <b>Article questions tap water quality / Hearing on regulatory oversight</b> |
| <b>When:</b> | <b>Today</b>   |

In a continuation of its ongoing "Toxic Waters" series, the *New York Times* today published a story titled "[Millions in U.S. drink dirty water, records show.](#)" The story was published the same day as a U.S. Senate committee hearing on federal oversight of drinking water.

The story and public hearing may prompt follow-up stories from local and national media. Water utilities – and especially small systems -- should be prepared to answer questions about their water quality and compliance records. Some talking points to assist you are attached.

Utility members may recall from previous AWWA advisories that the Times story and the hearing precede the anticipated release of an Environmental Working Group (EWG) report that will highlight violations of the SDWA. ([See our Nov. 5 EWG advisory here](#)). The EWG report is expected to call out communities that have had violations.

AWWA 's response to the Times story will include a letter to the editor, which will be posted to our web site.

Questions? Please contact Greg Kail, AWWA Public Affairs, [gkail@awwa.org](mailto:gkail@awwa.org), 303-734-3410.

# Suggested Utility Talking Points

Following Dec. 8, 2009, NY Times article

- [Our utility] takes seriously our responsibility to provide safe, high quality water to our customers. We monitor frequently – even continuously for certain contaminants -- to assure that our water meets the high standards of the Safe Drinking Water Act.
- We are committed to transparency. Each year, we mail each customer a consumer confidence report that includes detailed information on water quality, including any violations of health protective standards under the Safe Drinking Water Act. We have additional information available on our web site and welcome calls from customers.
- We are pleased to report that our utility met every single federal and state standard last year and continues to meet those standards today.  
*or*  
As reported in our CCR report, this year we [explanation of violation followed by explanation of steps taken to correct the problem]
- Our customers can be assured that in the event of contamination that poses an urgent risk to public health, we will immediately notify customers and advise them of how to protect themselves.
- The first and most effective way to prevent contamination of drinking water is to protect our precious water sources. We should all work for public policy that protects surface and groundwater from contamination, long before that water gets to our community's utility.