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The Authoritative Resource on Safe Water®

Public Affairs Advisory

TO: AWWA Leadership
All Utilities

FROM: AWWA Public Affairs

DATE: December 17, 2009

Who:	NY Times / EWG
What:	Latest 'Toxic Waters' story
When:	Published today

The New York Times today published the latest installment in its "Toxic Waters" series. The story, titled "[That Tap Water is Legal But May be Unhealthy](#)," suggested standards under the Safe Drinking Water Act are not protective enough and drew attention to Environmental Working Group's (EWG) [Tap Water Quality Database](#) and rankings.

The Times story is accompanied by video and interactive elements. AWWA expects the Times to continue to promote its series through other media, so utilities should be prepared for additional media inquiries resulting from the story.

AWWA released a [public statement on Friday](#), a day before the EWG report's publication. Our latest talking points for utilities are also provided again below.

AWWA has been notified by many utilities that the EWG report contains inaccuracies. *If your utility's data was inaccurate or mischaracterized in EWG's finished report, please reply to this email with details.*

In addition, AWWA advises utilities to send data corrections to Chris Campbell at EWG, at chris@ewg.org.

Concurrent with its report, EWG published a [national ranking of tap water quality](#). Utilities experiencing media coverage due to these rankings are invited to contact Greg Kail in AWWA Public Affairs, gkail@awwa.org, 303-734-3410, for assistance in responding.

AWWA will keep utilities informed of additional activities in this area.

Suggested Utility Talking Points

- [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. Every 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 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sets standards under the safe Drinking Water Act for nearly 100 contaminants. In evaluating which contaminants to regulate, EPA takes into account potential human health impacts and occurrence data.
- 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.