

More Than 140 Contaminants With No Enforceable Safety Limits Found in the Nation's Drinking Water.

Utilities need more money to monitor for contaminants and protect source waters.

(WASHINGTON, Dec. 20, 2005) - The first ever nationwide compilation of tap water testing results from drinking water utilities shows widespread contamination of drinking water with scores of contaminants for which there are no enforceable health standards. Examples include the gasoline additive MTBE, the rocket fuel component perchlorate, and a variety of industrial solvents. The pollution affects more than one hundred million people in 42 states.

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The findings are derived from the largest compilation of tap water data ever assembled. Over a two-year period, analysts at Environmental Working Group (EWG) gathered tap water testing data from 42 states to produce the most comprehensive picture of tap water quality ever created.

States collect water quality testing data from drinking water utilities to fulfill their role as primary enforcement agents, but federal law fails to give EPA authority to do the same. EWG will be making its data available to the EPA, state authorities and water utilities. Individuals can find their own community water system at www.ewg.org/sites/tapwater/yourwater/.

The EWG analysis also found almost 100 percent compliance with enforceable health standards on the part of the nation's water utilities, showing a clear commitment to comply with safety standards once they are developed. The problem, however, is EPA's failure to establish enforceable health standards and monitoring requirements for scores of widespread tap water contaminants.

"Our analysis clearly demonstrates the need greater for protection of the nation's tap water supplies, and for increased health protections from a number of pollutants that are commonly found but currently unregulated." said Jane Houlihan, Vice President for Science at EWG. "Utilities routinely go beyond what is required to protect consumers from these contaminants, but they need more money for testing, and for protection of vital source waters."

The National Tap Water Testing database is available at www.ewg.org/sites/tapwater/.

Tap water contaminants that have been found by water utilities and that lack enforceable health standards are available at www.ewg.org/sites/tapwater/national/unregcontams.php/.

EWG is a nonprofit research organization based in Washington, D.C., that uses the power of information to protect human health and the environment. The group's work on water quality is available at www.ewg.org/issues/siteindex/issues.php?issueid=5006.