Safe Water Advocates Applaud Publication of Revised Total Coliform Rule

Revised regulation further enhances safety of U.S. drinking water

Washington, D.C. – A diverse group of drinking water providers and environmental and health organizations applauded yesterday’s announcement of a revised rule to safeguard U.S. drinking water.

A pre-publication copy of the final Revised Total Coliform Rule (RTCR) was released Dec. 20 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and will be published in the Federal Register in the next few weeks. Significant improvements were made during the revision process, including new requirements that ensure assessment and corrective action when monitoring results indicate a potential risk of contamination exists.

Environmental groups, drinking water utilities, public health advocates and regulators expressed support for the revised rule, saying it promotes best practices for keeping water safe in distribution systems while improving communication about potential health threats. Last revised in 1989, the TCR provides a regulatory framework to decrease the risk of pathogens in water reaching consumers’ taps.

Among the organizations applauding the RTCR are the American Water Works Association (AWWA), the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA), Clean Water Action, the National Association of Water Companies (NAWC), the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC).

The revised rule builds on a decade of research, targeted analysis, and stakeholder involvement by the agency and the drinking water community. It reflects the work of the EPA’s Total Coliform Rule / Distribution System Advisory Committee, which included water utilities, consumer and environmental advocates and other stakeholders.

“The collaborative process leading to the Revised Total Coliform Rule was exemplary,” said AWWA Deputy Executive Director Tom Curtis. “The revised TCR will be effective because it truly promotes best practices that assure delivery of high quality drinking water to customers’ homes.”

“The Revised TCR Rule, which reflects the recommendations of diverse stakeholders working together in an intensive 13-month process, is an innovative approach to identifying contamination...
risks and making sure that drinking water treatment and distribution systems are performing well,” said Clean Water Action National Campaigns Director Lynn Thorp.

“EPA gathered many diverse perspectives in its federal advisory committee process,” said AMWA Executive Director Diane VanDe Hei. “The result is a rule that makes good sense for water consumers and providers.”

“This new safe drinking water rule is a big win for public health,” said NRDC Program Attorney Mae Wu. “It will protect Americans from water contaminated by bacteria and will help water utilities address problems quickly so they can continue delivering clean water to their customers.”

“This revised rule demonstrates the effectiveness of a collaborative process that acquires input from all interested parties at the onset of a regulatory process to ensure an outcome that leads to improved delivery of safe drinking water to households and businesses,” said NAWC Executive Director Michael Deane.

“Small and rural communities welcome the new rule which will both enhance public health protection and reduce the regulatory burden on local communities,” said NRWA Analyst Mike Keegan. “The new rule recognizes the importance of local governments and local responsibility in protecting public health and ensuring the safety of the drinking water supply. We thank the White House, the U.S. EPA, our friends in the environmental community and the drinking water community for their efforts and assistance in finalizing this very helpful and progressive policy.”

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The American Water Works Association is the authoritative resource for knowledge, information, and advocacy to improve the quality and supply of water in North America and beyond. AWWA is the largest organization of water professionals in the world. AWWA advances public health, safety and welfare by uniting the efforts of the full spectrum of the entire water community.

The Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies is an organization of the largest publicly owned drinking water systems in the United States. AMWA’s membership serves more than 130 million Americans with drinking water from Alaska to Puerto Rico.

Clean Water Action is a national organization with over 1 million members which works in 15 states. Clean Water Action runs campaigns for health and environmental protections and has a long history of engagement on drinking water issues and Safe Drinking Water Act implementation.

The National Association of Water Companies is the voice of the private water industry—the organization exclusively representing this group of quality service providers, innovation drivers and responsible partners. Private water service companies help provide essential water and wastewater services to nearly 73 million people in the United States.

The National Rural Water Association, through its state affiliates, is the largest water and wastewater utility membership organization in the nation representing over 28,353 public water and wastewater utilities. While membership includes utilities of all sizes, they primarily service populations of 10,000 or less and comprise 94% of the public water systems in America.

The Natural Resources Defense Council is the nation's most effective environmental action group, combining the grassroots power of 1.3 million members and online activists with the courtroom clout and expertise of more than 350 lawyers, scientists and other professionals.

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