



Engineering, Operations, & Technology Committee

Update on Community Water Fluoridation

Item 6a

July 7, 2025

Item 6a Update on Community Water Fluoridation

Subject

Fluoridation of drinking water

Purpose

Provide an update on community water fluoridation, including Metropolitan's current practice, federal court ruling, and recent activities

Next Steps

Continue to track federal and state actions on community water fluoridation

Community Water Fluoridation



Background

- Benefit of fluoride in protecting against tooth decay recognized over 100 years ago
- Water fluoridation in U.S. started in 1945
- Many studies have demonstrated safety of fluoridation at levels typically applied to water in U.S.
- Community water fluoridation is recognized by CDC as one of the top 10 public health achievements of the 20th century
- 72 percent of U.S. population served by community water systems receives fluoridated drinking water, including most of the 50 largest cities

Background – Fluoridation at Metropolitan

- 1995: California Fluoridation Act (AB 733)
 - Requires systems with $\geq 10,000$ service connections to fluoridate water supply when funding becomes available
- 2001: Dental health directors and county health officials in Metropolitan's service area requested Metropolitan implement water fluoridation
 - Widespread regional benefit to public health and cost savings
- 2003: Metropolitan's Board adopted Fluoridation Policy
 - California Dental Association Foundation provided \$5.5 M grant to cover planned capital and initial O&M costs

Background – Fluoridation at Metropolitan

- 2007: Member Agency fluoridation workshop and extensive public outreach
- October 2007: California Department of Public Health approval
 - Fluoridation included in state operating permit
- Adjust naturally occurring fluoride to recommended optimum level of 0.7 mg/L
 - EPA primary MCL = 4 mg/L; California MCL = 2 mg/L
- Comply with operating permit, fluoridation plan, and monitoring requirements

*2007 State Permit
Amendment*

Permit Amendments Issued after November 9, 1992	Effective Date	Permitted Modifications
1910087PA-002	10/26/2007	Implementation of fluoridation treatment at the Robert B. Diemer Treatment Plant, the Joseph Jensen Treatment Plant, the Henry J. Mills Treatment Plant, the Robert A. Skinner Treatment Plant, and the F.E. Weymouth Treatment Plant. Addition of the San

Opposition to Community Water Fluoridation

- Medical concerns include fluorosis and reduced IQ in children
- Ethical concern about mass medication without consent

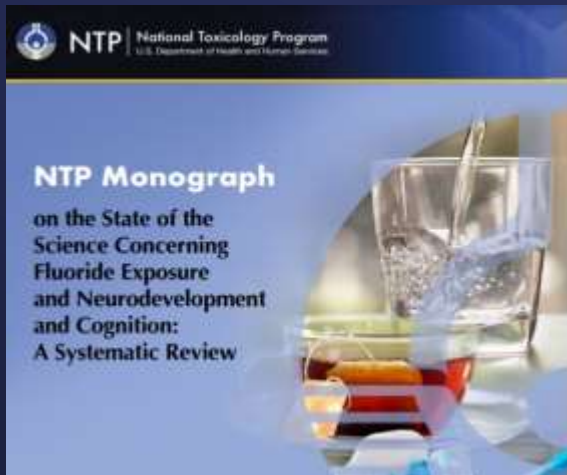


Fluoride Action Network Pamphlet

- Fluoride Action Network
- Food & Water Watch
- Citizens for Safe Drinking Water
- Moms Against Fluoridation



National Toxicology Program (NTP) Monograph



Literature Review and Analysis

- 2024: Review of 19 published studies on fluoride health effects (2003-2020)
 - China, Mexico, Canada, India, Iran
 - No studies in U.S.
- Concluded with moderate confidence that drinking water with fluoride concentrations exceeding 1.5 mg/L is associated with lower IQ in children
 - Did not address exposure to fluoride at optimum dose for dental health in U.S. (0.7 mg/L)

Litigation Against Drinking Water Fluoridation

Food & Water Watch, Inc., et al. vs. EPA

- September 2024: Federal district court judge ruled that fluoridated drinking water poses unreasonable risk of injury to public health
 - Requires U.S. EPA to take regulatory action under the federal Toxic Substances Control Act
 - Ruling does not dictate what actions EPA must take
- Jan. 2025: EPA filed an appeal and subsequent requests for additional time
 - Opening brief due July 18

California Response to Federal District Court Ruling

- State Water Resources Control Board has made no public comment
 - California requires fluoridation for water systems with $\geq 10,000$ service connections if funding is available
 - Fluoride and fluoridation website
www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Fluoridation.html
- Statement by California Department of Public Health

Community water fluoridation is a safe, effective, and equitable public health measure that benefits people of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds by reducing tooth decay

CDPH Director and State Dental Director – April 2025



State Activities on Community Water Fluoridation

- Utah and Florida passed bills banning drinking water fluoridation
- Bills to ban or limit fluoridation were rejected or failed in committee in eight states
 - New Hampshire, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee
- Nine states considering bans, local control measures, or opt-out provisions
 - Connecticut, New Jersey, Hawaii, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas

Drinking Water Fluoridation at Metropolitan



Next Steps

- No change in Metropolitan's current treatment operations is required
- Continue to comply with all regulatory requirements and operating permit
- Monitor legal and regulatory developments resulting from the district court ruling
- Monitor federal action by Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. EPA
- Provide updates to Board and Member Agencies as appropriate

