EPA: United States Environmental Protection Agency

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News Releases - Compliance and Enforcement

EPA Releases Searchable Website for Drinking Water Violations / Agency to host webinar to show how to use the public health data

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WASHINGTON — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today announced improvements to the availability and usability of drinking water data in the Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO) tool. ECHO now allows the public to search to see whether drinking water in their community met the standards required under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), which is designed to safeguard the nation's drinking water and protect people's health. SDWA requires states to report drinking water information periodically to EPA. ECHO also includes a new feature identifying drinking water systems that have had serious noncompliance.

"Today's improvements to EPA's ECHO tool support President Obama's directive to make it easier for the public to search for and use the information we collect," said Cynthia Giles, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. "Improved access to information about our nation's drinking water is critical for communities, nonprofit organizations, public water suppliers, regulators and industry that all have a stake in ensuring the water in our communities is safe and healthy to drink."

The new Safe Drinking Water Act information on EPA's website provides:

- Users with information about whether their drinking water has exceeded drinking water standards.
- A serious violators report that lists all water suppliers with serious noncompliance.
- EPA's 2009 National Public Water Systems Compliance Report, which is a national summary of compliance and enforcement at public drinking water systems.

The serious violators list identifies water systems that have had serious noncompliance due to a combination of unresolved violations. The data in ECHO shows that overall, the number of systems identified as serious violators continues to decrease due to lead agencies, in most cases the states, more efficiently addressing serious noncompliance. Currently, approximately 4 percent of all public water systems are considered serious violators. Through increased oversight and enforcement efforts, EPA will continue to work to reduce the rate of noncompliance and the number of public water systems that are serious violators.

Under the SDWA, water suppliers are required to promptly inform customers if drinking water has been contaminated by something that could cause immediate illness or impact people's health. If such a violation occurs, the water system will announce the violation and provide information about the potential health effects, steps the system is taking to correct the violation, and the need to use alternative water supplies (such as boiled or bottled water) until the problem is corrected. Systems inform customers about violations of less immediate concern in the first water bill sent after the violation, in a Consumer Confidence Report, or by mail.

EPA's enforcement goals for clean water include working with states and tribes to ensure clean drinking water for all communities and improving transparency by making facility compliance data available to the public. The release of drinking water violations data in ECHO advances these goals and creates additional incentives for government agencies to improve their reporting of drinking water violations and increase efforts to address those violations.

EPA will host a webinar demonstrating how to use the Safe Drinking Water Act violation information in ECHO on Tuesday, May 17, 2011 at 2 p.m. EDT. The demonstration will show users how to search for information about local water quality, how to compare data by state, and highlight other features of the tool.

Reserve webinar seat: https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/787466401
Safe Drinking Water Act search page: http://www.epa-echo.gov/echo/compliance_report_sdwa.html
Enforcement and Compliance History Online tool: http://www.epa-echo.gov/echo/

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