

## Slightly Slighted by Report



A small mention in a report, “Drinking Water Customer Satisfaction Survey,” by the Gallop Organization enlisted by the EPA, rubbed me the wrong way. I’ll be honest with you ... in this 14-page or so report it was only one sentence that had me irked. Such few words seemed to undo what our industry works for and that is greater awareness to the public and government about what our products really can do. Considering this report went to our government/EPA and on permanent record, I hope that it will not be misinterpreted. Perhaps I read too much into it, but it bothered me.

All that being said, here is the judgement made in the report: “EPA’s database indicates 94 percent of Americans are drinking water that meets federal standards. Therefore, a number of Americans may be taking unnecessary and costly precautions.” These precautions were not mentioned specifically, but the statement was written within the section discussing water treatment devices and bottled water use. I interpreted that as a dreadful statement for us. Although the United States has the “cleanest drinking water in the world,” current standards do not mean our industry cannot offer the public an even higher quality of water to protect against unpredictable events such as *E. coli* or *Cryptosporidium* outbreaks, aid municipalities in lowering contaminant levels even more, treat water for well owners or offer more aesthetically pleasing water. This just seemed to be an awfully bold statement based on results of a small study of 1,000 American households that was simply inquiring about knowledge, communications and use. Can you officially conclude that people using devices and bottled water are wasting their money just from these numbers alone?

I am not attacking the report entirely. There were helpful and interesting facts that can benefit dealer efforts. The survey assessed drinking water consumer knowledge, water use, public confidence with information sources and the value placed on EPA’s right-to-know efforts. Ninety-four percent of those surveyed were able to identify whether or not they were on a well or community water system, which demonstrates that Americans seem to have a general understanding of their water supply. As people are becoming more aware of their water quality and their sources, they become concerned with health-related issues and want to protect themselves. That makes a part of your demonstration already partially completed before you walk in the door. Thirty-three percent of those polled said they treat, filter, purchase bottled water, etc., because of health-related concerns. Another approximately 28 percent cited taste as their reason.

Demographically speaking, people ages 30–40 as well as those with higher education levels were more likely to purchase water filtering and treatment devices and bottled water. The percentage of people purchasing bottled water (74 percent) continues to rise, with approximately 20 percent drinking it exclusively. Thirty-seven percent of those polled report using a filtering or treatment device. Roughly 56 percent of Americans drink straight from the tap. That leaves an awful lot of potential customers for dealers to sell to. At least 56 percent of the population could use water treatment in their homes—that doesn’t even include the amount of business out there for C&I applications.

Don’t worry, I did not miss the point of the survey, which was to gauge how the EPA is doing reaching the public and to evaluate America’s water habits. For that it is a stepping stone. Although I still believe there is no place for haphazard statements, and I apologize if I take things personally.

Best Wishes,

*Wendi*

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