

Becoming the Expert



In December, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration announced that as a part of a collaboration, a new high-speed robotic screening system would begin testing a library of 10,000 compounds for potential toxicity. The vast list of compounds includes medications, industrial chemicals and consumer products, and also will include some chemical mixtures.

The results could have implications for the water treatment industry, as we are continually learning about chemicals that could affect human health entering our water supplies, from medications to hormones to cleaning products. The list of potential water contaminants is ever expanding and the water treatment industry is working hard to keep up with the changes.

It is easy for consumers to become overwhelmed by often-sensationalized news reports about what may be affecting drinking water. It was around this time last year that the Environmental Working Group reported that it found chromium-6 in tap water in 31 U.S. cities at levels above the proposed limit for the state of California.

The report received plenty of attention from the mainstream media. Many of the original news reports stated that EPA does not regulate chromium-6—a statement that was not quite accurate, as EPA does have regulatory limits for total chromium, which includes chromium-6 (the agency was quick to clarify this with a press release). In addition, many people had already heard of the chemical from the movie “Erin Brockovich,” in which the title character fights for the rights of residents of Hinkley, Calif., whose health had been affected by chromium-contaminated groundwater.

In short, it is easy for the average homeowner to become overwhelmed by the amount of information available, and it is hard to know what is true versus what is media sensationalism. As the list of potential contaminants grows, the water treatment industry has the opportunity to step up and give consumers the information and products they need.

For these reasons, it is more important than ever for water treatment professionals to educate themselves on the issues affecting their customers’ water, whether they are contaminants like arsenic that have been known to plague groundwater sources for many years or recently discovered contaminants that are now becoming concerns.

The industry provides ample opportunities to stay informed. Organizations like the Water Quality Assn. and regional or state associations provide educational opportunities through webinars, seminars or tradeshow. As you set business and personal goals for 2012, consider what you will do to educate and position yourself as an expert in water quality and water treatment—not only as a way to help make sales, but also to provide an invaluable service to your customers.

Kate Cline

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coming up next month

- Rainwater Harvesting
- Contaminant Removal
- Membranes
- Disinfection
- Dealer Insight
- Business Column

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