

HEALTH REPORT

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DRUGS FOUND IN CITY WATER SUPPLIES! SENATORS CALL FOR COMMITTEE HEARINGS!

Two U.S. Senators have reacted immediately to a 5-month Associated Press (AP) story that has brought to light the fact that pharmaceutical drugs are present in measurable quantities in many of the water supplies of major cities in the United States. The hearings are expected to take place in early April as reports of drugs found in water supplies from Southern California in the west to New Jersey in the east have become widely known.

Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ), chairman of the Transportation Safety, Infrastructure Security and Water Quality Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, and Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA), chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee have taken the lead in calling for a full investigation. According to the AP investigation, water supplies contaminated with trace amounts of pharmaceutical drugs affect at least 41 million Americans.

The AP study surveyed the 50 largest cities in the U.S. A dozen additional major water providers were checked, as well as small providers of drinking water in all 50 states. The results showed that 24 major metropolitan areas had detectable amounts of drugs in drinking water. In addition, tests done to the watersheds of 35 major water suppliers showed 28 testing positive for pharmaceuticals.

The levels of pharmaceuticals found in water are measured in parts per billion or parts per trillion. While these amounts are far below the levels of medical uses, scientists fear that ingestion of these tiny amounts of drugs over a long period of time may pose health risks to the public. There is also concern that these small amounts may affect lower forms of cellular and animal life and ensuing alterations or accumulations may ultimately have a negative effect on people.

When the Senate investigatory committee convenes, they will specifically be looking at how and why a vast array of pharmaceuticals, including antibiotics, anti-convulsants, mood stabilizers, pain relievers and sex hormones are entering the water supply. For instance, the reason why 56 pharmaceuticals or drug byproducts were discovered in the city of Philadelphia's water supply will be looked at another matter they will investigate will be what are anti-epileptic and anti-anxiety drugs doing in the water of Southern California residents where some 18.5 million people are being affected?

Drugs enter the water supply in various ways. One way is through waste water treatment that does not account for drug removal. People taking medications only absorb a percentage of the drugs they take and the remainder are excreted and sent to sewage processing. Also, people who dispose of unused medications by dumping them down a toilet and sending them to waste water treatment are contributing to the problem. And, of course, agricultural growth hormones in cattle and other animals can contribute as well.

"Our families deserve water that is clean and safe. I am deeply concerned by the findings of this study showing traces of drugs in the water in New Jersey and across the nation," said Sen. Lautenberg. Sen. Boxer added, "I call on the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) to take whatever steps are necessary to keep our communities safe."