

New EPA Guidelines Issued

By Karen R. Smith

A new guidance document entitled, *Point-of-Use or Point-of-Entry Treatment Options for Small Drinking Water Systems*, is now available from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Copies of the 127-page document can be downloaded from the agency's website at <http://epa.gov/safewater/smallsysteminfo.htm>.

Very similar to the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality recognition of POU devices as a cost-effective alternative for arsenic removal in small systems, the federal agency's introduction notes "...the challenges facing small public water systems...POU or POE treatment devices may be an option for (such systems) where central treatment is not affordable."

Technical, operational and managerial issues that small systems may likely face when implementing POU or POE programs are presented in clearly defined categories, accompanied throughout with simple line drawings. Cost benefits, case studies and sample monitoring logs are all included.

While obviously aimed predominantly at those public water systems (PWS), *WC&P* readers, take note: "POU and POE units must be owned, controlled, and maintained by the PWS or by a contractor hired by the PWS to ensure proper operation and maintenance of the devices and compliance with MCLs."

All of which means if you are not currently marketing to the small systems in your region, now might be the time to start.

The overview of POU and POE treatment includes adsorptive media, ion exchange, granular activated carbon and reverse osmosis (AM, IX, GAC and RO, respectively). Simple line drawings illustrate typical installations, while easy-to-use spreadsheets enable prompt comparisons between the treatments.

While some blanket statements are made (i.e., "GAC media are prone to microbial colonization") it is, overall, an objective representation of options. The agency states it prepared the document with the help of stakeholders on the March 22 draft and with peer review by POU/POE experts.

Nearly half the document consists of case studies on 22 POU and POE projects, included to provide real-world

information on how systems have implemented these treatments. Both capital expenditure and operations/maintenance costs are included.

Outreach flyers to educate the public should prove valuable to utilities opting for POU devices.

Sample Public Education Flyer for Chronic Contaminants

Your Tap Water and Point-of-Use Treatment Devices

Why have I received a Point-of-use device?

Your water system has installed a point-of-use (POU) treatment device under your kitchen sink to remove chronic contaminants from your water. Treatment is necessary because contaminant levels in your source water exceed an EPA limit. Health effects from chronic contaminants vary depending on the contaminant but can include things like cancer and liver damage. These health effects occur only after chronic exposure (drinking the water over many years)

Because centralized treatment at the water treatment plant is very expensive, your system is instead providing POU devices to all households and buildings. By treating only the water used for drinking and cooking, the water system can save money and pass the savings on to its customers.

What steps should I take?

Use water from the tap with the POU device for drinking and cooking. In your kitchen, use the untreated tap for washing dishes. Water from other taps in your house is NOT treated; do not use water from those taps for drinking or for brushing teeth. Untreated water may be safely used for bathing and laundry.

In addition, the water system needs your cooperation to properly maintain the POU device. Maintenance ensures that the device is working correctly and that your water is safe. Please allow water system personnel into your home to take water samples or replace devices.

In issuing this guidance, EPA has taken a leadership role in finding solutions for small systems facing rising costs. For dealers and manufacturers, the policy represents a new opportunity nationwide.