



# CLEAN WATER ACTION

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Clean Water Action and Allies Urge MA DEP to Set Stringent Standards on Perchlorate**

At the close of public comment, Clean Water Action and a host of health and environmental groups today pressed the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MA DEP) to issue a more stringent standard for perchlorate in drinking water than the 2.0 parts per billion (ppb) proposed. Four years after the detection of perchlorate in drinking water wells on Cape Cod, the MA DEP has proposed a permanent standard for drinking water and for clean-up of perchlorate. However, DEP's own scientific analysis of the contaminant points to a safety standard of 1.0 ppb, public health groups contend. Currently, DEP's interim standard of 1 ppb is in place, while US EPA continues to delay regulation of this harmful contaminant.

Perchlorate is a chemical used in fireworks, automobile air bag inflators, explosives and rocket fuel. It is highly soluble in water, and has long been recognized for its toxicity to the human thyroid. Damage to the thyroid leads to developmental disorders of the central nervous system, caused by the inhibition of iodide uptake. The brains of developing fetus and infants are highly vulnerable to perturbations of thyroid hormones. Iodine deficiency has been reported as the most common preventable cause of mental retardation.

"MA DEP undertook a comprehensive study and acted responsibly when contamination of drinking water sources with perchlorate was discovered in 2002," said Becky Smith, Clean Water Action's Water Program Organizer. "We commend the determined research that led to the identification of threatened systems, the sources of contamination, and the measures taken to reduce exposure to this thyroid hormone disrupter. However, DEP needs to stand firm and issue a final standard of 1 ppb or less that is protective of our children's developing brains."

Perchlorate has been detected at levels above 1 ppb in 14 drinking water systems in the state. These systems supply water at least part of the year to nearly 180,000 people. Over 40 other public water systems in 12 counties also detected perchlorate at levels below 1 ppb. Private wells have also been affected by perchlorate contamination. The proposed drinking water standard does not address private wells and appropriate actions should be taken to provide the same protection to private well owners.

Recent reports show that perchlorate is also found in fruits, wines, and beers, milk, lettuce, prenatal vitamins, soybeans, cucumbers, and strawberries. For this reason, some water suppliers have claimed that the burden of perchlorate contamination rests too heavily on their shoulders. However, MA DEP’s research shows that levels of 1 ppb are easily achievable. Perchlorate in water is also more easily controlled.

The study identified by MA DEP and the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) as the most suitable primary basis for the health assessment underestimates the problem because it does not account for long-term exposure, exposures of fetuses, breastfeeding infants, and children, exposures of people sensitive to thyroid-disrupting substances, or other sensitive populations, other sources of perchlorate exposures, or the potential additive or interactive effects of other chemical exposures. This study was funded by Lockheed Martin, an aerospace manufacturer, the world's largest defense contractor.

“There is no convincing evidence to demonstrate that a level over 1.0ppb would ensure the health of vulnerable populations, fetuses, premature infants, newborns and breastfeeding infants. There is no evidence that shows that any level of perchlorate is safe for these populations,” said Myriam Beaulne, Clean Water Biologist.

“The MA DEP should set a clean-up standard that would protect all groundwater as they may seep into current drinking water sources or become future sources,” says Clean Water Action’s Drinking Water Program Director Chris Bathurst. The parties responsible for the contamination should be held accountable for its clean-up.”

List of 14 towns (or systems) with detects over 1ppb

<b>Water Systems with Detection Levels Above 1 ppb</b>
AQUARION WATER COMPANY: MILLBURY (Worcester)
BELLINGHAM DPW WATER & SEWER DIV. (Northfolk)
BOURNE
DAVENPORT BUILDING (Hampshire)
HADLEY HIGHWAY & WATER DEPT
HARVARD RIDGE CONDOMINIUM (Boxborough)
INDUSTRIAL DISMANTLING CORP. (Southbridge)
LAWRENCE WATER WORKS (Essex)
METHUEN WATER DEPT (Essex)
MT GREYLOCK REGIONAL SCHOOL (Berkshire)
SPOFFORD POND SCHOOL (Essex)
TEWKSBURY WATER DEPT (Middlesex)
UPHAM FARMS CONDOMINIUMS (Worcester)
WESTFORD WATER DEPARTMENT (Middlesex)
WESTPORT HIGH SCHOOL (Bristol)

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