

SUBCHAPTER XII—SAFETY OF PUBLIC
WATER SYSTEMS

PART A—DEFINITIONS

§ 300f. Definitions

For purposes of this subchapter:

(1) The term “primary drinking water regulation” means a regulation which—

(A) applies to public water systems;

(B) specifies contaminants which, in the judgment of the Administrator, may have any adverse effect on the health of persons;

(C) specifies for each such contaminant either—

(i) a maximum contaminant level, if, in the judgment of the Administrator, it is economically and technologically feasible to ascertain the level of such contaminant in water in public water systems, or

(ii) if, in the judgment of the Administrator, it is not economically or technologically feasible to so ascertain the level of such contaminant, each treatment technique known to the Administrator which leads to a reduction in the level of such contaminant sufficient to satisfy the requirements of section 300g-1 of this title; and

(D) contains criteria and procedures to assure a supply of drinking water which dependably complies with such maximum contaminant levels; including accepted methods for quality control and testing procedures to insure compliance with such levels and to insure proper operation and maintenance of the system, and requirements as to (i) the minimum quality of water which may be taken into the system and (ii) siting for new facilities for public water systems.

At any time after promulgation of a regulation referred to in this paragraph, the Administrator may add equally effective quality control and testing procedures by guidance published in the Federal Register. Such procedures shall be treated as an alternative for public water systems to the quality control and testing procedures listed in the regulation.

(2) The term “secondary drinking water regulation” means a regulation which applies to public water systems and which specifies the maximum contaminant levels which, in the judgment of the Administrator, are requisite to protect the public welfare. Such regulations may apply to any contaminant in drinking water (A) which may adversely affect the odor or appearance of such water and consequently may cause a substantial number of the persons served by the public water system providing such water to discontinue its use, or (B) which may otherwise adversely affect the public welfare. Such regulations may vary according to geographic and other circumstances.

(3) The term “maximum contaminant level” means the maximum permissible level of a contaminant in water which is delivered to any user of a public water system.

(4) PUBLIC WATER SYSTEM.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term “public water system” means a system for the provision to

the public of water for human consumption through pipes or other constructed conveyances, if such system has at least fifteen service connections or regularly serves at least twenty-five individuals. Such term includes (i) any collection, treatment, storage, and distribution facilities under control of the operator of such system and used primarily in connection with such system, and (ii) any collection or pretreatment storage facilities not under such control which are used primarily in connection with such system.

(B) CONNECTIONS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of subparagraph (A), a connection to a system that delivers water by a constructed conveyance other than a pipe shall not be considered a connection, if—

(I) the water is used exclusively for purposes other than residential uses (consisting of drinking, bathing, and cooking, or other similar uses);

(II) the Administrator or the State (in the case of a State exercising primary enforcement responsibility for public water systems) determines that alternative water to achieve the equivalent level of public health protection provided by the applicable national primary drinking water regulation is provided for residential or similar uses for drinking and cooking; or

(III) the Administrator or the State (in the case of a State exercising primary enforcement responsibility for public water systems) determines that the water provided for residential or similar uses for drinking, cooking, and bathing is centrally treated or treated at the point of entry by the provider, a pass-through entity, or the user to achieve the equivalent level of protection provided by the applicable national primary drinking water regulations.

(ii) IRRIGATION DISTRICTS.—An irrigation district in existence prior to May 18, 1994, that provides primarily agricultural service through a piped water system with only incidental residential or similar use shall not be considered to be a public water system if the system or the residential or similar users of the system comply with subclause (II) or (III) of clause (i).

(C) TRANSITION PERIOD.—A water supplier that would be a public water system only as a result of modifications made to this paragraph by the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996 shall not be considered a public water system for purposes of the Act until the date that is two years after August 6, 1996. If a water supplier does not serve 15 service connections (as defined in subparagraphs (A) and (B)) or 25 people at any time after the conclusion of the 2-year period, the water supplier shall not be considered a public water system.

(5) The term “supplier of water” means any person who owns or operates a public water system.

(6) The term “contaminant” means any physical, chemical, biological, or radiological substance or matter in water.

(7) The term “Administrator” means the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

(8) The term “Agency” means the Environmental Protection Agency.

(9) The term “Council” means the National Drinking Water Advisory Council established under section 300j-5 of this title.

(10) The term “municipality” means a city, town, or other public body created by or pursuant to State law, or an Indian Tribe.

(11) The term “Federal agency” means any department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States.

(12) The term “person” means an individual, corporation, company, association, partnership, State, municipality, or Federal agency (and includes officers, employees, and agents of any corporation, company, association, State, municipality, or Federal agency).

(13)(A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), the term “State” includes, in addition to the several States, only the District of Columbia, Guam, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

(B) For purposes of section 300j-12 of this title, the term “State” means each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

(14) The term “Indian Tribe” means any Indian tribe having a Federally recognized governing body carrying out substantial governmental duties and powers over any area. For purposes of sections 300j-12, 300j-19a, and 300j-19b of this title, the term includes any Native village (as defined in section 1602(c) of title 43).

(15) COMMUNITY WATER SYSTEM.—The term “community water system” means a public water system that—

(A) serves at least 15 service connections used by year-round residents of the area served by the system; or

(B) regularly serves at least 25 year-round residents.

(16) NONCOMMUNITY WATER SYSTEM.—The term “noncommunity water system” means a public water system that is not a community water system.

(July 1, 1944, ch. 373, title XIV, §1401, as added Pub. L. 93-523, §2(a), Dec. 16, 1974, 88 Stat. 1660; amended Pub. L. 94-317, title III, §301(b)(2), June 23, 1976, 90 Stat. 707; Pub. L. 94-484, title IX, §905(b)(1), Oct. 12, 1976, 90 Stat. 2325; Pub. L. 95-190, §8(b), Nov. 16, 1977, 91 Stat. 1397; Pub. L. 99-339, title III, §302(b), June 19, 1986, 100 Stat. 666; Pub. L. 104-182, title I, §101(a), (b)(1), Aug. 6, 1996, 110 Stat. 1615, 1616; Pub. L. 114-322, title II, §2111, Dec. 16, 2016, 130 Stat. 1729.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996, referred to in par. (4)(C), is Pub. L. 104-182, Aug. 6, 1996, 110 Stat. 1613. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title of 1996 Amendment note set out under section 201 of this title and Tables.

AMENDMENTS

2016—Par. (14). Pub. L. 114-322 substituted “sections 300j-12, 300j-19a, and 300j-19b of this title” for “section 300j-12 of this title”.

1996—Par. (1). Pub. L. 104-182, §101(a)(1)(B), inserted at end “At any time after promulgation of a regulation referred to in this paragraph, the Administrator may add equally effective quality control and testing procedures by guidance published in the Federal Register. Such procedures shall be treated as an alternative for public water systems to the quality control and testing procedures listed in the regulation.”

Par. (1)(D). Pub. L. 104-182, §101(a)(1)(A), inserted “accepted methods for” before “quality control”.

Par. (4). Pub. L. 104-182, §101(b)(1), designated existing provisions as subpar. (A), inserted par. and subpar. headings, redesignated former subpars. (A) and (B) as cls. (i) and (ii), respectively, substituted “water for human consumption through pipes or other constructed conveyances” for “piped water for human consumption” in first sentence, and added subpars. (B) and (C).

Par. (13). Pub. L. 104-182, §101(a)(2), designated existing provisions as subpar. (A), substituted “Except as provided in subparagraph (B), the term” for “The term”, and added subpar. (B).

Par. (14). Pub. L. 104-182, §101(a)(3), inserted at end “For purposes of section 300j-12 of this title, the term includes any Native village (as defined in section 1602(c) of title 43).”

Pars. (15), (16). Pub. L. 104-182, §101(a)(4), added pars. (15) and (16).

1986—Par. (10). Pub. L. 99-339, §302(b)(2), substituted “Indian Tribe” for “Indian tribal organization authorized by law”.

Par. (14). Pub. L. 99-339, §302(b)(1), added par. (14).

1977—Par. (12). Pub. L. 95-190 expanded definition of “person” to include Federal agency, and officers, employees, and agents of any corporation, company, etc.

1976—Par. (13). Pub. L. 94-484 defined “State” to include Northern Mariana Islands.

Pub. L. 94-317 added par. (13).

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1996 AMENDMENT

Pub. L. 104-182, §2(b), Aug. 6, 1996, 110 Stat. 1614, provided that: “Except as otherwise specified in this Act [enacting sections 300g-7 to 300g-9, 300h-8, 300j-3c, and 300j-12 to 300j-18 of this title and section 1263a of Title 33, Navigation and Navigable Waters, amending this section, sections 300g-1 to 300g-6, 300h, 300h-5 to 300h-7, 300i, 300i-1, 300j to 300j-2, 300j-4 to 300j-8, 300j-11, and 300j-21 to 300j-25 of this title, sections 4701 and 4721 of Title 16, Conservation, and section 349 of Title 21, Food and Drugs, repealing section 13551 of this title, enacting provisions set out as notes under this section, sections 201, 300g-1, 300j-1, and 300j-12 of this title, section 1281 of Title 33, and section 45 of former Title 40, Public Buildings, Property, and Works, and amending provisions set out as a note under section 201 of this title] or in the amendments made by this Act, this Act and the amendments made by this Act shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act [Aug. 6, 1996].”

SHORT TITLE

This subchapter is known as the “Safe Drinking Water Act”, see note set out under section 201 of this title.

TERMINATION OF TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

For termination of Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, see note set out preceding section 1681 of Title 48, Territories and Insular Possessions.

EFFECT OF PUBLIC LAW 104-182 ON FEDERAL WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ACT

Pub. L. 104-182, §2(c), Aug. 6, 1996, 110 Stat. 1614, provided that: “Except for the provisions of section 302 [42 U.S.C. 300j-12 note] (relating to transfers of funds),

nothing in this Act [see Effective Date of 1996 Amendment note above] or in any amendments made by this Act to title XIV of the Public Health Service Act [42 U.S.C. 300f et seq.] (commonly known as the "Safe Drinking Water Act") or any other law shall be construed by the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency or the courts as affecting, modifying, expanding, changing, or altering—

"(1) the provisions of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act [33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.];

"(2) the duties and responsibilities of the Administrator under that Act; or

"(3) the regulation or control of point or nonpoint sources of pollution discharged into waters covered by that Act.

The Administrator shall identify in the agency's annual budget all funding and full-time equivalents administering such title XIV separately from funding and staffing for the Federal Water Pollution Control Act."

CONGRESSIONAL FINDINGS

Pub. L. 104-182, § 3, Aug. 6, 1996, 110 Stat. 1614, provided that: "The Congress finds that—

"(1) safe drinking water is essential to the protection of public health;

"(2) because the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300f et seq.) now exceed the financial and technical capacity of some public water systems, especially many small public water systems, the Federal Government needs to provide assistance to communities to help the communities meet Federal drinking water requirements;

"(3) the Federal Government commits to maintaining and improving its partnership with the States in the administration and implementation of the Safe Drinking Water Act;

"(4) States play a central role in the implementation of safe drinking water programs, and States need increased financial resources and appropriate flexibility to ensure the prompt and effective development and implementation of drinking water programs;

"(5) the existing process for the assessment and selection of additional drinking water contaminants needs to be revised and improved to ensure that there is a sound scientific basis for setting priorities in establishing drinking water regulations;

"(6) procedures for assessing the health effects of contaminants establishing drinking water standards should be revised to provide greater opportunity for public education and participation;

"(7) in considering the appropriate level of regulation for contaminants in drinking water, risk assessment, based on sound and objective science, and benefit-cost analysis are important analytical tools for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of drinking water regulations to protect human health;

"(8) more effective protection of public health requires—

"(A) a Federal commitment to set priorities that will allow scarce Federal, State, and local resources to be targeted toward the drinking water problems of greatest public health concern;

"(B) maximizing the value of the different and complementary strengths and responsibilities of the Federal and State governments in those States that have primary enforcement responsibility for the Safe Drinking Water Act; and

"(C) prevention of drinking water contamination through well-trained system operators, water systems with adequate managerial, technical, and financial capacity, and enhanced protection of source waters of public water systems;

"(9) compliance with the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act continues to be a concern at public water systems experiencing technical and financial limitations, and Federal, State, and local governments need more resources and more effective authority to attain the objectives of the Safe Drinking Water Act; and

"(10) consumers served by public water systems should be provided with information on the source of the water they are drinking and its quality and safety, as well as prompt notification of any violation of drinking water regulations."

GAO STUDY

Pub. L. 104-182, title I, §101(b)(2), Aug. 6, 1996, 110 Stat. 1617, required the Comptroller General to study the reliance for residential water on various nonpublic water systems and to submit a report on the results of the study to Congress within 3 years after Aug. 6, 1996.

SAFE DRINKING WATER AMENDMENTS OF 1977 RESTRICTIONS ON APPROPRIATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Pub. L. 95-190, §2(e), Nov. 16, 1977, 91 Stat. 1393, provided that: "Nothing in this Act [see Short Title of 1977 Amendment note set out under section 201 of this title] shall be construed to authorize the appropriation of any amount for research under title XIV of the Public Health Service Act [42 U.S.C. 300f et seq.] (relating to safe drinking water)."

SAFE DRINKING WATER AMENDMENTS OF 1977 AS NOT AFFECTING AUTHORITY OF ADMINISTRATOR WITH RESPECT TO CONTAMINANTS

Pub. L. 95-190, §3(e)(2), Nov. 16, 1977, 91 Stat. 1394, provided that: "Nothing in this Act [see Short Title of 1977 Amendment note set out under section 201 of this title] shall be construed to alter or affect the Administrator's authority or duty under title 14 of the Public Health Service Act [42 U.S.C. 300f et seq.] to promulgate regulations or take other action with respect to any contaminant."

RURAL WATER SURVEY; REPORT TO PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS; AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

Pub. L. 93-523, § 3, Dec. 16, 1974, 88 Stat. 1693, as amended by Pub. L. 95-190, §§2(d), 3(d), Nov. 16, 1977, 91 Stat. 1393, 1394, directed Administrator of Environmental Protection Agency, after consultation with Secretary of Agriculture and the several States, to enter into arrangements with public or private entities to conduct a survey of quantity, quality, and availability of rural drinking water supplies, which survey was to include, but not be limited to, consideration of number of residents in each rural area who presently are being inadequately served by a public or private drinking water supply system, or by an individual home drinking water supply system, or who presently have limited or otherwise inadequate access to drinking water, or who, due to absence or inadequacy of a drinking water supply system, are exposed to an increased health hazard, and who have experienced incidents of chronic or acute illness, which may be attributed to inadequacy of a drinking water supply system. Survey to be completed within eighteen months of Dec. 16, 1974, and a final report thereon submitted, not later than six months after completion of survey, to President and to Congress.

FEDERAL COMPLIANCE WITH POLLUTION CONTROL STANDARDS

For provisions relating to the responsibility of the head of each Executive agency for compliance with applicable pollution control standards, see Ex. Ord. No. 12088, Oct. 13, 1978, 43 F.R. 47707, set out as a note under section 4321 of this title.

TERMINATION OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Pub. L. 93-641, § 6, Jan. 4, 1975, 88 Stat. 2275, set out as a note under section 217a of this title, provided that an advisory committee established pursuant to the Public Health Service Act shall terminate at such time as may be specifically prescribed by an Act of Congress enacted after Jan. 4, 1975.

PART B—PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS

§ 300g. Coverage

Subject to sections 300g-4 and 300g-5 of this title, national primary drinking water regulations under this part shall apply to each public water system in each State; except that such regulations shall not apply to a public water system—

- (1) which consists only of distribution and storage facilities (and does not have any collection and treatment facilities);
- (2) which obtains all of its water from, but is not owned or operated by, a public water system to which such regulations apply;
- (3) which does not sell water to any person; and
- (4) which is not a carrier which conveys passengers in interstate commerce.

(July 1, 1944, ch. 373, title XIV, §1411, as added Pub. L. 93-523, §2(a), Dec. 16, 1974, 88 Stat. 1662.)

§ 300g-1. National drinking water regulations**(a) National primary drinking water regulations; maximum contaminant level goals; simultaneous publication of regulations and goals**

(1) Effective on June 19, 1986, each national interim or revised primary drinking water regulation promulgated under this section before June 19, 1986, shall be deemed to be a national primary drinking water regulation under subsection (b). No such regulation shall be required to comply with the standards set forth in subsection (b)(4) unless such regulation is amended to establish a different maximum contaminant level after June 19, 1986.

(2) After June 19, 1986, each recommended maximum contaminant level published before June 19, 1986, shall be treated as a maximum contaminant level goal.

(3) Whenever a national primary drinking water regulation is proposed under subsection (b) for any contaminant, the maximum contaminant level goal for such contaminant shall be proposed simultaneously. Whenever a national primary drinking water regulation is promulgated under subsection (b) for any contaminant, the maximum contaminant level goal for such contaminant shall be published simultaneously.

(4) Paragraph (3) shall not apply to any recommended maximum contaminant level published before June 19, 1986.

(b) Standards

(1) IDENTIFICATION OF CONTAMINANTS FOR LISTING.—

(A) GENERAL AUTHORITY.—The Administrator shall, in accordance with the procedures established by this subsection, publish a maximum contaminant level goal and promulgate a national primary drinking water regulation for a contaminant (other than a contaminant referred to in paragraph (2) for which a national primary drinking water regulation has been promulgated as of August 6, 1996) if the Administrator determines that—

- (i) the contaminant may have an adverse effect on the health of persons;
- (ii) the contaminant is known to occur or there is a substantial likelihood that the

contaminant will occur in public water systems with a frequency and at levels of public health concern; and

(iii) in the sole judgment of the Administrator, regulation of such contaminant presents a meaningful opportunity for health risk reduction for persons served by public water systems.

(B) REGULATION OF UNREGULATED CONTAMINANTS.—

(i) LISTING OF CONTAMINANTS FOR CONSIDERATION.—(I) Not later than 18 months after August 6, 1996, and every 5 years thereafter, the Administrator, after consultation with the scientific community, including the Science Advisory Board, after notice and opportunity for public comment, and after considering the occurrence data base established under section 300j-4(g) of this title, shall publish a list of contaminants which, at the time of publication, are not subject to any proposed or promulgated national primary drinking water regulation, which are known or anticipated to occur in public water systems, and which may require regulation under this subchapter.

(II) The unregulated contaminants considered under subclause (I) shall include, but not be limited to, substances referred to in section 9601(14) of this title, and substances registered as pesticides under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act [7 U.S.C. 136 et seq.].

(III) The Administrator's decision whether or not to select an unregulated contaminant for a list under this clause shall not be subject to judicial review.

(ii) DETERMINATION TO REGULATE.—(I) Not later than 5 years after August 6, 1996, and every 5 years thereafter, the Administrator shall, after notice of the preliminary determination and opportunity for public comment, for not fewer than 5 contaminants included on the list published under clause (i), make determinations of whether or not to regulate such contaminants.

(II) A determination to regulate a contaminant shall be based on findings that the criteria of clauses (i), (ii), and (iii) of subparagraph (A) are satisfied. Such findings shall be based on the best available public health information, including the occurrence data base established under section 300j-4(g) of this title.

(III) The Administrator may make a determination to regulate a contaminant that does not appear on a list under clause (i) if the determination to regulate is made pursuant to subclause (II).

(IV) A determination under this clause not to regulate a contaminant shall be considered final agency action and subject to judicial review.

(iii) REVIEW.—Each document setting forth the determination for a contaminant under clause (ii) shall be available for public comment at such time as the determination is published.

(C) PRIORITIES.—In selecting unregulated contaminants for consideration under sub-