



Drinking Water Fluoridation in Washington State (WAC 246-290-460)

Washington State Board of Health
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PUBLIC HEALTH
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HEALTHIER COMMUNITY



Department of Health Mission

We work with others to protect and improve the health of all people in Washington State.



Overview

- Background
- Reason for rule making
- Basis for the new U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' recommendation
- Process for developing proposed rule
- Informal comment period
- Department's recommendation
- Significant analysis
- Next steps

Background



- Community water systems across the country have been fluoridating for more than 70 years.
- In 2012, more than 210 million Americans, or nearly 75 percent of the population served by public water systems, drank water with optimal fluoride levels.
- Our current rule, WAC 246-290-460, requires that systems maintain concentrations between 0.8 and 1.3 mg/L.

Reason for Rule Making

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) recommendation for community water fluoridation:
 - ✓ The new recommendation is for a single level of 0.7 milligrams of fluoride per liter of water (mg/L).
 - ✓ It updates and replaces the 1962 recommended range of 0.7 to 1.2 mg/L.

Basis for New HHS Recommendation

- Current evidence shows water consumption is consistent across all U.S. temperature zones.
- Sources of fluoride have increased since the early 1960s.

Process for Developing Proposed Rule

- The State Board of Health filed a CR-101 to consider revising the rule:
 - ✓ Based on the new HHS recommendation for an optimal fluoride level of 0.7 mg/L.
 - ✓ To add a new notification requirement for water systems.
 - ✓ To make clarifications to monitoring and corrective actions.

Process for Developing Proposed Rule (cont.)

- The Department of Health:
 - ✓ Developed draft rule language.
 - ✓ Asked stakeholders and interested parties for comments on the draft rule.
 - ✓ Asked water systems to provide costs of the draft rule.

Informal Comment Period

- What we heard from water systems:
 - ✓ Concerns that the operating range of 0.6 to 1.0 mg/L was not equally distributed around the optimal level of 0.7 mg/L. This could cause an operational challenge.
- What we did:
 - ✓ Changed the operating range to 0.5 to 0.9 mg/L to create an equal distribution and reduce operating challenges while still maintaining public health protection.

Informal Comment Period (cont.)

- What we heard from interested parties:
 - ✓ Comments in support and opposition concerning adding fluoride to drinking water supplies in Washington.
- What we did:
 - ✓ After careful evaluation, the department determined that reducing the fluoride concentration is a safe and effective public health strategy to prevent tooth decay in Washington.

Department's Recommendation

- Rule language:
 - ✓ Adds a new optimal fluoride concentration level of 0.7 mg/L.
 - ✓ Reduces the operating range of 0.8 to 1.3 mg/L, down to 0.5 to 0.9 mg/L.
 - ✓ Sets a new requirement for water systems to notify the department before permanently stopping fluoridation.

Department's Recommendation (cont.)

- Rule language:
 - ✓ Clarifies daily and monthly monitoring requirements.
 - ✓ Clarifies the method to calculate monthly concentration averages.
 - ✓ Clarifies corrective actions when measurements are out of operating tolerance or off measure.

Significant Analysis

- A cost survey of the 51 water systems that fluoridate resulted in a response rate of 76 percent.
- What we heard:
 - ✓ Costs for lowering the operating range showed an overall cost savings due to a slight decrease on the use of fluoride.
 - ✓ Most systems reported no or nominal costs associated with notifying the department before stopping fluoridation.

Significant Analysis (cont.)

- Alternatives considered:
 - ✓ Not adopt the new HHS recommendation and maintain current rule.
 - ✓ Set the fluoride concentration range at 0.0 mg/L.
 - ✓ Repeal WAC 246-290-460.
 - ✓ Set operating range at 0.6 to 1.0 mg/L.

Next Steps

- File CR-102 proposed rule – January 20, 2016
- Written comment deadline – February 23, 2016
- Public hearing – March 9, 2016
- File CR-103 (if proposed rule adopted) – April 2016
- Rule effective date – 31 days after filing

Questions?

Optimal Fluoride Levels, 1962

