

# The Word in Water

## Contaminants of Emerging Concern



MOUNTAIN WATER COMPANY

Missoula, Montana

Autumn 2011

Since the late 1990's, there has been an increasing awareness that chemicals are winding up in the environment worldwide, including waterways that are sources for drinking water. Pharmaceuticals, personal care products, and endocrine disrupting substances all fall under the EPA's general classification of "Contaminants of Emerging Concern", or CECs. While there have been recent concerns related to ecological impacts on fish and animals that live in these waters, little is known about the impact of CECs on the human body, particularly since very low environmental levels are typically found.

Whether the sources are from industrial plants, farming operations, septic tanks and sewers, or wastewater effluent from sewage treatment plants, there is a great deal of research going on to learn more about the impacts of CECs. This is especially true for occurrence of CECs in watersheds and drinking water sources. Due to scientific testing equipment improvements, looking for these substances has become substantially easier. Only a handful of years ago, equipment was only able to detect substances in the parts-per-million range. Today, laboratories are able to detect these substances in the parts-per-trillion or even parts-per-quadrillion range.

As far back as 2002, Mountain Water Company (MWC) participated in an American Water Works Association Research Foundation study on the occurrence of estrogenic substances in drinking water. Two wells considered to be possibly vulnerable to these substances coming from upstream sources were sampled. Nothing was detected. This was good news.

Still, we at MWC continue to be attentive to what might reach our source water, enabling us to react to emerging issues as soon as possible to protect the precious resource we have in the Missoula Aquifer. That is why we worked with the State of Montana and City County Health

Department in the early 1990's to develop a sophisticated Wellhead Protection Program. Still, what people consume, whether it is prescription drugs or substances in food and drink, may eventually wind up in water somewhere.

MWC has had a long relationship with The University of Montana (UM) in working with faculty and both Master's and Doctoral candidates to help fund specific research on the Missoula Aquifer. In 2008, William Woessner from the UM Department of Geosciences came to us with the idea of utilizing modern detection technology to study the vulnerability of the Missoula Aquifer to CEC contamination. We agreed to help fund the study and offered to allow the use of some of our wells for sampling. Even though Missoula's wastewater treatment plant is down gradient from our wells (which means discharges from this plant can't reach our wells), we knew we are still downstream from other communities like Drummond, Deer Lodge and Butte; all the way to the Continental Divide.

During the study period there were several CECs found in Missoula's wastewater plant, but only two were found in MWC production wells, and both at very low concentrations. The UM student found Sulfamethoxazole (an antibiotic) in two wells and Atrazine (an herbicide) in one well. All of the findings were less than 3 parts-per-trillion. Not to trivialize the fact that they were found, but to lend perspective, 3 parts-per-trillion is equivalent to less than 3 drops of water in a string of railroad tank cars ten miles long, or less than three square inches in 250 square miles.

The Atrazine is believed to come from storm water runoff; reflecting both its use throughout the community to control weeds and the community's use of storm water injection wells to get rid of runoff. Additionally, this substance is regulated in Federal drinking water guidelines at 1,000 times greater than this recent finding.

### Contact Us

<b>Phone:</b>	<b>406-721-5570 or 800-721-5570</b>
<b>Phone Hours:</b>	<b>8 a.m.-5 p.m. M-F</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>1345 West Broadway Missoula, MT 59802</b>
<b>Walk-In Office Hours:</b>	<b>7:30 a.m-5:30p.m. M-F</b>
<b>Closed:</b>	<b>Weekends &amp; Holidays</b>
<b>24-Hour Emergency:</b>	<b>406-721-5570</b>
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<b>Mailing Address:</b>	<b>P.O. Box 4826 Missoula, MT 59806</b>
<b>Website:</b>	<b>www.mtnwater.com</b>

We at MWC want our customers to be informed about what is in our drinking water. Our Annual Consumer Confidence Report is mailed each May, outlining water quality data on substances we are required to test for by federal law. Currently, we are not required to report on CECs in our water system, but feel it is highly important that our community is aware of the information that has emerged through the UM study. Due to our concern that any new information regarding CECs may have become "lost" in the CCR, we chose instead to provide you with this information in a separate mailing in the hopes that it would get more attention and provide space to fully explain the significance of the results.

For further information on CECs, go to the following USEPA web address: <http://water.epa.gov/scitech/cec/>.

## MWC Awarded for Safety

Mountain Water Company was honored to receive the Wendel R. Ladue Safety Award of Excellence for 2011 from the American Water Works Association. Pictured is our Safety Director Tony Tacke accepting the award in Washington D.C. this June.



## Service Line Ownership

Mountain Water Company often receives questions regarding the ownership of private service lines. The line connecting your residence to the water main is owned solely by the property owner. The Public Service Commission (PSC) rules, under Sub-Chapter 25, state "all expense of laying and maintaining the service pipes from the mains to the premises of the consumer must be borne by the consumer." Every residence has an outside shut-off which is also owned by the homeowner. Under the same Sub-Chapter, the regulation states "a curb cock and curb box of approved pattern must be installed by the consumer at a point designated by the utility." PSC 38.5.2503 also states "this curb cock and box must be easily accessible and must be kept in repair by the owner of the premises." Additionally, "Service lines shall be so arranged that the supply of each separate building, house or premises, may be controlled by a separate curb cock, placed within or near the line of the street curb". Mountain Water Company is pleased to assist our customers in shutting water off for repairs or in an emergency situation; however, each homeowner must ensure the curb cock is operable. Any repairs on the service line or curb box are the responsibility of the homeowner. Please contact our office if you have any further questions regarding service lines.

## Bill Pay Options

### Cash, Checks or Money Orders

Mail in your payment to P.O. Box 4826, Missoula, MT 59806 or deliver your payment to 1345 W. Broadway in Missoula.

### Credit Cards / e-Check\*

We now accept Visa, Master Card, Discover, and electronic checks via telephone (866-790-7218) or by logging into our website at

[www.mtnwater.com](http://www.mtnwater.com)

(\*\$2.95 convenience fee is assessed by third party processor; \$300 payment limit per transaction).

### Direct Debit (Free Service!):

You may sign the authorization on the back of your bill stub, call our office to request the Direct Debit Authorization Form or print it out at [www.mtnwater.com/debitpayment/htm](http://www.mtnwater.com/debitpayment/htm). Send in the completed form with a voided check, and Mountain Water will directly deduct the amount due each month from your bank account.

**IF YOU'VE HAD A SERVICE APPOINTMENT AND WANT TO COMMENT, WE'D APPRECIATE YOUR PARTICIPATION IN OUR ONLINE SERVICE QUALITY SURVEY AT [WWW.MTNWATER.COM](http://WWW.MTNWATER.COM)**

## Low Income Discount

**You may be eligible for a reduction on your monthly water bill. To be eligible, you must qualify annually for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP). The Human Resource Council will then provide Mountain Water with satisfactory evidence of qualification. Please contact the HRC at (406) 728-3710 for more information.**