

Just how safe is our drinking water?

As an elected Director with the North Coast County Water District in Pacifica, I and other Directors have a sworn obligation to see that clean, safe water is provided to the citizens of this district. I feel that we are now being challenged to guarantee that we have met that challenge. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission provides 100 percent of this district's water. On Feb. 2, 2004, the SFPUC changed the disinfectant for the water system from chlorine to chloramine, which is a combination of chlorine and ammonia. There was no opportunity for input or dissent from the water districts that would be affected by this change.

There were insufficient warnings as to the effects from chloramine that would ensue. Consequently, 1) Hospitals, at the cost of tens of thousands of dollars, had to replace all kidney dialysis filtration systems. 2) There have been reported cases of adverse health effects attributed to chloramine, such as severe skin problems, respiratory problems such as life-threatening asthma and digestive dis-

Guest Column

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orders. 3) Chloramine kills fish, amphibians, and reptiles. Many residents have lost their aquatic pets. 4) According to the World Health Organization, chloramine is a less effective disinfectant than chlorine and for that reason they have advised people with suppressed immune systems to boil their drinking water for over 10 minutes if there is chloramine in their water system. 5) Chloramine is corrosive to lead and copper pipes, and rubber plumbing parts. 6) Since chloramine is very persistent in water, it is almost impossible to remove or filter out, putting those sensitive to chloramine at risk. 7) There are no

studies on the health effects from chloramine itself. No dermal or inhalant studies were ever done by the Environmental Protection Agency, the World Health Organization, or by any other agency. 8) Also, no in-depth studies have been done as to the effects of chloramine on animals and the environment.

Why was chloramine not studied more thoroughly before it was placed in our water system? I feel that the public is entitled to greater oversight by public agencies such as the SFPUC which has control over our water supply and has the obligation as well as the duty to provide clean, safe water. I do not believe that they have honored that obligation. For further information, call Denise Johnson-Kula at 328-0424.

Violet Gotelli is an elected member of the Board of Directors of the North Coast County Water District. She is also a former Pacifica City Council Member and Mayor Pro Tem.