

Press Release: March 28, 2006
Citizens Concerned About Chloramine CCAC

Ira Ruskin Introduces Bill to Explore Alternatives to Chloramine

On February 23, 2006 Assembly Member Ira Ruskin introduced Assembly Bill AB 2402 to investigate the new disinfectant, chloramine, in the water supply. This was a significant development for the non-profit group, Citizens Concerned About Chloramine (CCAC) who has been working for the last two years to resolve the chloramine issue. The bill was the result of overwhelming response from people who contacted Ruskin's office who had health effects or concerns regarding chloramine. The bill is preliminary at this point but CCAC is working closely in its development with Peter Hartnet who is Ira Ruskin's senior legislative assistant.

The San Francisco Public Utility Commission (SFPUC) introduced the new disinfectant, chloramine (a combination of chlorine and ammonia) into the Hetch Hetchy water distribution system in February 2004. This was in response to the Environmental Protection Agency's new ruling that trihalomethane levels were to be lowered in treated water supplies. Since then, chloramine in the water supply has caused severe health problems, environmental risks, and plumbing damage. The health effects in particular are of great concern because many people are suffering from the skin, respiratory and digestive symptoms caused by the chloramine, some of them life-threatening. The SFPUC was given other choices by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

CCAC recommends the World Health Organization's solution to controlling for trihalomethanes, which is the use of prefiltration prior to disinfection with chlorine rather than chloramine. This eliminates the trihalomethanes while providing better and safer water disinfection.

CCAC has been actively working to raise the level of awareness of the problems through letters and articles, flier distribution, informational meetings, meetings with lawmakers and by making public comments at water board meetings. CCAC's major claim that no health studies were done on the skin and respiratory effects of chloramine has been confirmed by the North Coast County Water District (NCCWD) who searched the available scientific literature and found no studies. That no health studies had been done was further confirmed by the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA) who requested health study information from four governmental regulatory agencies—the San Francisco Public Utility Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency, the California Department of Health Services Drinking Water and Environmental Management, and the American Waterworks Association.

AB 2402 would require the California State Department of Health to take a closer look at treatment methods, technologies and managing options for safer disinfection of water to protect public health. Most importantly, the bill might include possible research studies to analyze the toxic effect of chloramine on people's health.

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