

## Source Water Assessment and Protection

The 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) provided for source water assessment and protection programs designed to build a prevention barrier to drinking water contamination. Under the SDWA, states are required to develop comprehensive Source Water Assessment Programs that identify the areas that supply public tap water, inventory contaminants, and assess water system susceptibility to contamination. They are also required to inform the public of the results. The Virginia Department of Health is currently conducting these assessments.

The assessments must be completed by October 31, 2001. Activities currently under way include conducting an inventory of Potential Sources of Contamination within the watershed above each intake and a Windshield Survey of land use activities and Potential Sources of Contaminants within a five-mile radius upstream of each intake. After the assessment is completed, we will provide you with information about potential sources of contamination within the watershed and measures to reduce or eliminate these potential contaminants.

The Water Authority recently expanded on the ongoing assessment work to include the entire 590 square mile Occoquan watershed and a larger area of the Potomac watershed. In addition, the Water Authority is working with neighboring water suppliers to obtain additional information about the Potomac.

## Cryptosporidium

Cryptosporidium is a single-celled organism that lives and reproduces within the intestines of an animal host. During its life cycle it matures into resistant cells called oocysts that can be shed in feces. The disease caused by cryptosporidium is called cryptosporidiosis and is caused by infection with oocysts.

People can be exposed to oocysts from other people, animals, drinking water, swimming pools, fresh food, soils, and any surface that has not been sanitized after exposure to feces. Symptoms can range from a mild diarrhea to incapacitating diarrhea, cramps, loss of appetite, weight loss, nausea, and low-grade fever.

Currently, accurate methods for detecting cryptosporidium at very low levels are not available. Therefore, EPA does not require testing of treated (finished) water unless concentrations in raw water (before treatment) exceed 10 oocysts per liter (L). All raw water tests performed by the Water Authority have been well below the EPA threshold.

## Testing for Lead

Infants and young children are typically more vulnerable to lead in drinking water than the general population. It is possible that lead levels at your home may be higher than at other homes in the community as a result of materials used in your home's plumbing.

If you are concerned about potential elevated lead levels in your home's water, simply flush the tap for 30 seconds to two minutes prior to using for cooking or drinking. For information on having a lead level test conducted, call our Customer Service Department at (703) 698-5800. The charge for lead level testing of your home's water is \$35.00 per faucet. Additional information is available from the [Safe Drinking Water Hotline \(800-426-4791\)](#).

**Q.** Where does lead in drinking water come from?

**A.** Although some utility source waters contain lead, the Fairfax County Water Authority's sources do not. In 1986, lead was banned from being used in pipe and solder. In older homes where lead is present in pipe and solder connections, it may dissolve into the water after the water sits for long periods of time. The Water Authority adds a corrosion inhibitor to slow this dissolution process down. If you think lead may be present in the plumbing of your home, let your cold water run from the faucet for two minutes prior to using for drinking or cooking.