

## Chicago Water Department News Release/Pharmaceuticals

Statement of John F. Spatz, Jr., Commissioner

Chicago Department of Water Management

"Protecting the health of our customers is the Number One goal of the Department of Water Management. We are rigorous in performing all water quality tests mandated or suggested by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA). Our water is safe and the city of Chicago's compliance with regulations goes beyond the established standards for testing and water quality.

We are active in funding research on this emerging topic through the American Water Works Association Research Foundation and the USEPA.

Water professionals have the technology today to detect more substances—at lower levels—than ever before. As analytical methods improve, pharmaceutical compounds and personal care products are being found at very low levels in many of our nation's lakes, rivers and streams. Because of the improvement in these methods we are at often times finding more of these pharmaceuticals compounds in our water because of our improved testing mechanisms.

The fact that a substance is detectable does not mean the substance is harmful to humans. To date, research throughout the world has not demonstrated an impact on human health from pharmaceuticals and endocrine disrupting compounds in drinking water. We are constantly monitoring this emerging research.

Although our current laboratories have the appropriate scientific equipment to carry out all of the required tests, we are investing in renovations in our laboratories that anticipate new tests and protocols being developed.

We would also remind our customers that waste water is treated by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation. We are fortunate in having Lake Michigan as one of the purest water sources in the world.

While research has not demonstrated human health impacts from these compounds, the ongoing conversation should remind us of how precious our source waters are, and the need to protect them from harmful substances.

The federal Office of National Drug Control Policy recommends not flushing prescription drugs down the toilet unless the accompanying patient information specifically instructs it is safe to do so. We also encourage Chicago residents to drop-off unused medicine at the City of Chicago's Household Chemicals and Electronics Recycling Center (1150 N. North Branch) or to one of the City's neighborhood collection events.

Over the last couple years we have collected over 476 lbs of unused medicine at the facility."

*DuPage County residents can safely dispose of medications at the Household Hazardous Waste Disposal site in Naperville. This facility is open Saturday and Sunday from 9 AM to 3 PM at*

*Fire Station #4, 1971 Brook Dale Road. For more information see the Public Works' web page on Household Hazardous Waste.*