

IRVINE RANCH WATER DISTRICT POLICY POSITION FLUORIDATION

Revised: June 3, 2005

Issue Summary:

To promote better dental health, a number of water agencies have decided to add fluoride to the water supply system. Due to the presence of fluoride in its existing water supplies, Irvine Ranch Water District will not be supplementing its system with additional fluoride. IRWD will continue to communicate with its customers regarding fluoride levels in the water.

Background:

Fluoridation of public water supplies has been debated since the practice began back in 1945. Nationwide, approximately 67% of the population is receiving fluoridated water while 28% of California's population is receiving fluoridated water. Though fluoridation of water supplies has been endorsed by the American Medical Association, the American Dental Association and the American Water Works Association for over twenty years, many groups feel that it is not appropriate for public water utilities to add materials to the water beyond what is necessary to provide clean and safe water, whether is be from a risk perspective or a public policy perspective.

In 1995, California passed AB 733, which required large water systems of at least 10,000 service connections to fluoridate their water supplies if the State Department of Health Services (DHS) provided funding for the capital and the annual maintenance costs. In order to determine which water purveyors would receive funding, DHS required all water systems to estimate the capital costs required to purchase, install and operate the fluoridation systems. In 1995 IRWD staff estimated the capital costs to install fluoridation equipment to be approximately \$500,000 and the operation and maintenance costs to be \$25,000 annually. At the time, these costs did not include the addition of fluoride to the Los Alisos Water District area, which was later consolidated into IRWD.

The State's 167 water systems then were ranked according to the cost per customer to fluoridate. IRWD ranked 120 of the 167 systems, meaning there were 119 other water systems that would be funded prior to IRWD being offered DHS funding. To date, 13 water systems have been offered funding. Eleven of the systems have or are in the process of accepting DHS funding. Two of the 13 systems have declined the DHS's offer for funding and, as a result, DHS has initiated enforcement action against them. Fountain Valley and Huntington Beach are the only cities in Orange County that currently fluoridate their water supply. These cities voluntarily initiated fluoridation and do not receive State funding.

On February 11, 2003, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) decided to initiate a program to fluoridate the water it provides to its member agencies. The implementation process began in late 2003 and will be completed by December 2006, at which time IRWD will begin to receive fluoridated water from MWD. MWD has indicated that the fluoride level of the water treated at its plants will range from 0.7 to 0.8 ppm. Although the IRWD system in the Lake Forest area has average fluoride levels less than the rest of IRWD water system, these levels will increase as MWD begins fluoridating because of that area's dependence on MWD as its source of water. In addition, the fluoride concentrations in the Lake Forest area will increase

slightly due to the higher fluoride contained in water the area will receive from the Dyer Road and DATS wells.

Currently, IRWD does not add fluoride to any part of its system. There are natural sources of fluoride present in IRWD water, particularly the groundwater. These natural sources have caused the level of fluoride in the IRWD water system to be very near the fluoride levels recommended by DHS. The following chart illustrates how the background levels of naturally occurring fluoride compare to the levels of fluoride recommended for the IRWD service area and the projected fluoride levels of IRWD water after MWD begins fluoridating in December 2006:

	IRWD - Irvine Area	IRWD - Lake Forest Area
Current Fluoride Levels	0.46 ppm	0.16 ppm
Projected Fluoride Levels with MWD fluoridating	0.6 ppm	0.7 ppm
DHS recommended average	0.8 ppm	0.8 ppm

Most of inquiries IRWD receives regarding the fluoridation issue are from parents of young children who want to know, based on the fluoride level of their water, if they should provide fluoride supplements to their children. District staff provides these customers the average fluoride levels of water in the IRWD system, and advises them to consult with their dentist or family physician as to whether they should provide fluoride supplements to their children.

Policy Principles:

- IRWD will not provide supplemental fluoridation at this time for the following reasons:
 - Most of the IRWD water system already contains an average fluoride level that is very close to the State’s lower target level and this level will increase as MWD implements fluoridation.
 - Although the IRWD water system in the Lake Forest area has lower average fluoride levels than the rest of the water system, the fluoride levels will be increasing as MWD begins fluoridating its water.
 - When the Lake Forest area is able to receive water from the Dyer Road and DATS wells, the fluoride concentrations in that part of the IRWD system will increase due to the higher fluoride in groundwater.
- Due to the fact that IRWD potable water has very high ambient fluoride levels, DHS rated the District as a low priority for mandated supplemental fluoridation.
- On request, the District will provide information to customers regarding existing and future fluoride levels, and recommend that customers seek advice from their family physicians as to whether or not they should provide fluoride supplements to their children.