

## industry update

Compiled by WQP editorial staff

# 2007: Year in Review

A brief synopsis of the year in the water quality industry

As 2007 comes to a close, *WQP* would like to provide you with a brief update of important regulatory updates in the second half of the year, as well as a summary of guidelines and standards available for small drinking water systems. For your use as a reference throughout 2008, the following is a summary of information released by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), NSF and the World Health Organization.

### Lead in Drinking Water Rule

The U.S. EPA issued a final lead rule that increases requirements in the areas of monitoring, customer awareness and lead service line replacement. Specifically, the agency will require water suppliers to provide consumers with information to help them limit their exposure to lead in drinking water.

Since releasing the plan, the agency has distributed guidance to help public water systems better understand the potential impacts of treatment changes on their ability to control lead and asked the National Drinking Water Advisory Council to provide recommendations on public education requirements. The agency has also provided new or updated guidance and tools to help schools and childcare facilities monitor for lead in drinking water.

Lead is a highly toxic metal that was used for many years in products found in and around homes. Even at low levels, lead may cause a range of health effects, including behavioral problems and learning disabilities. Children who are six years old and under are most at risk because this is when the brain is developing. The primary source of lead exposure for most children is lead-based paint in older homes. Lead in drinking water can add to that exposure.

A copy of the rule and more information on lead in drinking water is available at: [www.epa.gov/safewater/lcrr/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/lcrr/index.html).

### NSF/ANSI Standard 61

On Aug. 16, NSF Intl. announced that NSF/ANSI Standard 61—the international standard for drinking water additives—was changed to include point-of-entry (POE) systems. The standard covers materials safety for all products that come into contact with drinking water in public and semipublic water supply applications. Nearly all plumbing codes and states require compliance to Standard 61.

NSF/ANSI 44 applies to residential and commercial cation-exchange water softeners. In the past, because Standard 44 included its own section on materials safety, Standard 61 excluded POE drinking water treatment systems altogether.

Many POE drinking water treatment systems are sold to and installed in semipublic water systems, such as restaurants, hotels, schools, commercial and municipal applications. Because plumbing codes for these applications specifically call for certification to Standard 61, and this standard did not cover POE equipment, manufacturers of components had to have products tested and certified twice for materials safety, to both NSF/ANSI standards 61 and 44.

NSF/ANSI Standard 44 and the materials safety sections of all the other drinking water treatment unit standards will also be changed to reference compliance for POE systems under NSF/ANSI Standard 61. Point-of-use equipment is not affected by these changes.

### WQA/NOWRA Joint Study of Water Softeners

A study on the potential effects of water softeners on septic tanks has made progress this past year, and preliminary results are expected in March.

The Water Quality Association (WQA) and the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA) have been working together to determine what effects, if any, water softener brine discharges might have on septic tanks.

The collaboration took a step forward this past July when representatives from both organizations traveled to North Carolina to witness a pilot study of 13 residential sites. The 13 sites all had septic tanks, and six also had water softeners. An extensive protocol was developed to evaluate the fitness of each septic tank system visited. Sampling included source water, as well as septic tank effluents and contents. In addition to representatives from WQA and NOWRA, a microbiologist and health department personnel were present.

A report of findings on the pilot study is planned for March during the WQA Aquatech USA in Las Vegas. *wqp*

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- [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)
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- [www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org)
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