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The Authoritative Resource on Safe Water®

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## Public Affairs Advisory

**TO:** AWWA Leadership  
All Utilities

**FROM:** AWWA Public Affairs

**DATE:** Sept. 14, 2009

<b>Who:</b>	AWWA Utility Members
<b>What:</b>	NY Times 'Toxic Waters' series
<b>When:</b>	Ongoing

Water utility managers and spokespersons should be aware of an ongoing New York Times series titled "Toxic Waters," which focuses on pollution in the environment and potential negative impacts on water at the tap.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/13/us/13water.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=toxic%20waters&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/13/us/13water.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=toxic%20waters&st=cse)

A Sept. 13 article from the series uses suspected contamination of wells in West Virginia to illustrate what the Times characterizes as lax oversight by state and federal regulators. By mixing anecdotes of environmental pollution with statistics on Safe Drinking Water Act violations, the article may lead to confusion and alarm among some customers. It may also inspire inquiries from local media looking to bring a local angle to the Times wire story.

The Times reports that its research shows:

"an estimated one in 10 Americans have been exposed to drinking water that contains dangerous chemicals or fails to meet a federal health benchmark in other ways. Those exposures include carcinogens in the tap water of major American cities and unsafe chemicals in drinking-water wells. Wells, which are not typically regulated by the Safe Drinking Water Act, are more likely to contain contaminants than municipal water systems."

*Note: The primary news reporter for the Sept. 13 article attended AWWA's Water Research Symposium in Austin, Texas, in February. It is likely that a future article in the series will focus on emerging contaminants in the environment and drinking water. For more information, contact AWWA Public Affairs at (303) 734-3410 or at [gkail@awwa.org](mailto:gkail@awwa.org).*