



LONG BEACH WATER DEPARTMENT

The Standard in Water Conservation &
Environmental Stewardship

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Monday, March 10, 2008

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Southern California Imported Water Source Cited in Associated Press Report on Pharmaceuticals

LONG BEACH, CA - The Associated Press (AP) is reporting that a southern California imported water supply source tested positive for two specific trace pharmaceutical compounds: Mebprobamatem, an anti-anxiety medication and Phenytoin, an anti-epileptic medication. Long Beach, along with other major area cities who are all customers of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), are listed in the report as having tested positive for these same two compounds.

The source of this information is a study conducted in 2006 by the MWD. "The two pharmaceutical compounds attributed to Long Beach were detected at the parts-per-trillion (ng/L per liter) level at one of the MWD's water treatment plants located in the San Fernando Valley, which we periodically get a portion of our water from," stated [Kevin Wattier](#), General Manager. "While there is much to be considered when analyzing this kind of data, the AP report hits squarely on a very important, and emerging, water quality issue."

The Long Beach Water Department has never sampled for these two particular pharmaceutical compounds. However, it did participate with the United States Geological Survey in a study conducted in 2006 in which three of the City's active groundwater wells were sampled for many different trace pharmaceutical, steroid and pesticide compounds. None of these compounds were detected.

According to the MWD, you would have to drink 120 Olympic-size swimming pools (60 million gallons) of water per day to get the recommended dose of the pharmaceutical compounds that were detected at their treatment plant. Nonetheless, the ability to detect these compounds is rapidly evolving, as the instrumentation allowing the water industry to do so improves.

“This news report should cause us all to be mindful of how we use and dispose of pharmaceutical and other personal care products,” according to [Bill Townsend](#), President of the Long Beach Board of Water Commissioners. While the science on detecting these trace compounds is still being developed, a better understanding in our society of the connection between what we throw away and our water supplies is needed.”

No Federal or State drinking water standards/regulations or any conclusive water quality control parameters exist for any of these emerging trace pharmaceutical compounds, according to [Dr. Robert Cheng](#), Assistant General Manager of Long Beach Water. “The Long Beach Water Department is continuing to closely monitor and manage this and other evolving water quality issues to the very best of our ability,” he said. “We’re not only officials charged with closely monitoring your water supply, we’re customers as well, mothers and fathers, all of us consuming this product at home.”

The [Long Beach Water Department](#) is an urban, southern California retail water supply agency and the standard in water conservation and environmental stewardship.

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