

## MTBE

California has imposed an interim action level for MTBE at 35 ug/L. An action level is an advisory level MCL that the Department of Health Services (DHS) assigns to a contaminate of concern for which there are no state regulations. The DHS does not enforce the advisory level MCL, rather advises the utilities to alert its customers should the level of the contaminate surpass the action level.

Currently, there are no federal drinking water regulations established for MTBE, though the EPA has issued a Health Advisory. "The Health Advisory provides guidance to prevent taste and odor problems. The Advisory recommends keeping levels of MTBE contamination in the range of 20 to 40 ug/L to 'protect consumer acceptance of the water resource...' and that these levels would also '...provide a large margin of exposure (safety) from toxic effects'. The Advisory states there is a weakness in the available health effects information due to the fact that the studies were '...not conducted by exposing animals to MTBE in drinking water, but rather by inhalation exposure or by introducing MTBE in oil directly to the stomach several times a week.' At the present time there is no direct information on adverse health effects in humans. Adverse health effects in animal studies, including cancer, have been demonstrated to occur, but at levels of exposure much higher than contained in the Health Advisory recommendations." Currently, MTBE is included in U.S. EPA's *Draft Drinking Water Contaminant Candidate List (CCL)*. Federal Register, October 6, 1997, (Volume 62, Number 193). The CCL lists includes contaminants which, at the time of publication, are not subject to any proposed or promulgated national primary drinking water regulation that are known or anticipated to occur in public water systems and which may require regulation under the Safe Drinking Water Act. The CCL is published after consultation with the scientific community and after notice and opportunity for public comment. The CCL will be the source of priority contaminants for drinking water research, monitoring, guidance development, and for selection of candidates for drinking water regulation. The *Final Drinking Water Contaminant Candidate List* will be published no later than February 1998. The EPA will continue to put out a new CCL every five years thereafter. By the year 2001, the EPA must select a minimum of five candidates from the CCL and determine whether or not regulation is required. A team of scientists and other experts will determine the research priorities from the CCL.

### Sources:

Personal Communication, Steve Book, California Department of Health Services, January 22, 1998.

USEPA, 1997. Federal Register Document (Volume 62, Number 193).

Montgomery Watson Drinking Water Update: EPA Issues Health Advisory for Methyl Tertiary Butyl Ether (MtBE). December 1997.

Drinking Water Advisory. EPA Fact Sheet. "Consumer Acceptability Advice and Health Effects Analysis on methyl Tertiary-Butyl Ether (MtBE)." EPA-822-F-97-009. December 1997.

American Water Works Association. Water Quality Technology Conference Proceedings. Denver, Colorado. November 1997.