

The New West



The Old West had small populations and certainly never had to worry about water quality. You can watch any Old West movie and see cowboys dipping their cups into a barrel outside the local saloon. Most of us cringe at what could be in there, but they just never worried.

Now, the face of the West is very different. The "New West" has emerged full of concerns and new laws that make water treatment necessary and some that make it harder to sell. California is well-known for its progressive way of thinking. Although often its tactics may be questioned, many people anxiously wait to see what will be next. Will there be more bans? Stricter regulations? The state's legislation continually has been challenged by the Water Quality Association, NSF International, water treatment professionals nationwide and other organizations. With all of this in mind, let's take a look at some things that are happening in the Western region.

- **Methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE)** continues to make headlines as gas companies continue taking steps towards eliminating its use in gasoline. Chevron U.S.A., Inc. announced its latest efforts to discontinue its use of MTBE in all gasoline sold in California. Its phaseout is expected to be complete by May of this year, finishing ahead of California Governor Gray Davis' deadline of December 2003. Chevron's gas uses ethanol instead of the more widely used MTBE, a possible carcinogen. MTBE was the product of choice to reduce air pollution until it was pinpointed as a water contaminant. Ethanol is the only approved oxygenate for California gas.
- **Perchlorate** is becoming more common in the the Southwest region of the United States. Drinking water supplies stemming from the Colorado River have seen a rise in perchlorate levels. The river serves approximately 20 million people, and the contamination has forced hundreds of wells to be closed. Most of the perchlorate manufactured in the United States is used as the primary ingredient of solid rocket propellant. Wastes from the manufacture and improper disposal of perchlorate-containing chemicals will demand treatments such as biological treatment and ion (anion) exchange systems with other technologies continually being examined.
- **Salinity concerns and issues relating to the California law SB 1006** continue to arise. The law went into effect January 1. This bill states that water districts can ban automatic water softeners if they meet a set of state-mandated criteria including being out of compliance with waste discharge or water reclamation standards. Also, districts must identify and take steps to reduce all sources of salt, and they must show that banning softeners would bring the district into compliance.

In addition to these issues and concerns, you can find out more about what's happening in the Western region on page 10. The focus on the Western states includes discussion on mold, arsenic and reverse osmosis technology updates.

Best Wishes,

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