

Talk Title: New Mexico Arsenic Compliance Strategy

Abstract: On January 23, 2001, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reduced the drinking water maximum contaminant level (MCL) for arsenic from 50 ppb to 10 ppb. The new Arsenic Rule applies to all community water systems (CWSs) and non-transient non-community water systems (NTNCWSs). The compliance date for the revised arsenic MCL is January 23, 2006.

The Arsenic Rule will have a significant impact on the water systems and population of New Mexico. Based upon an evaluation of sampling data, there are 95 water systems in New Mexico, representing a population of approximately 756,000, or 41% of the State's population, that will be affected by the new arsenic MCL. The majority of these systems are very small, serving a population of less than 500, but larger systems are affected as well, including the City of Albuquerque, the City of Rio Rancho, and the City of Santa Fe. Although there are several options that affected water systems may choose from in order to comply with the new arsenic standard, many of these options have inherent difficulties that can make them impractical for the water systems to implement by the compliance deadline.

In response to these issues, the Drinking Water Bureau of the New Mexico Environment Department has developed an arsenic compliance strategy that incorporates the Variance and Exemption Rule (VER) portion of the Safe Drinking Water Act. The VER can provide water systems additional time or tools to comply with the new arsenic standard without being out of compliance.

This presentation will provide a thorough overview of the arsenic compliance strategy; how public water systems can take advantage of it; the information that public water systems will need to obtain; and critical dates and deadlines for the entire process.

Biography: Chuck Thomas is the manager of the Albuquerque Area office of the Drinking Water Bureau, which oversees 391 public water systems, and is in charge of the Engineering Program for the Bureau. Mr. Thomas is a registered professional engineer in New Mexico and has over nine years of experience in the Drinking Water Program as an employee of the Bureau. Mr. Thomas is the designated contact for implementation of the Arsenic Rule for public water systems in New Mexico.

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