

FACT SHEET ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONSTRUCTIVE INTERACTION

INTRODUCTION:

The pace at which measures are being taken to protect U.S. citizens and their interests from terrorists has only escalated since the events of September 11, 2001. Activities are underway at all levels of government, academic institutions, trade associations, and other organizations that share critical responsibilities related to drinking water protection. With respect to drinking water, a major program is underway to assess vulnerabilities at public water supply facilities and prepare emergency response plans. While much is being done, additional opportunities exist to strengthen protection of our nation's drinking water for security and conventional purposes.

These opportunities arise from constructive interaction between government, water utilities, emergency personnel, academic institutions, health, technical and legal sectors, non-governmental organizations, and the general public. To promote interaction, it is important to consider the institution's relationship to drinking water security, challenges faced by related interests, progress that has been achieved through parties with vested interests, and legal authorities that provide the basis for action. "Clusters" of opportunities that provide the venue for diverse stakeholders to identify common ground and efficiently use available funds are provided below.

Homeland security is strengthened by the cooperation between government, the private sector, public interest organizations, and the public at large. Just as emergency management capabilities for hazardous materials has increased our safety record, this collaboration can protect our communities from acts of terrorism.

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WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Drinking water safety, security, and infrastructure are fundamentally linked through the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), which was amended after September 11, 2001 to address security needs. This fundamental connection is reinforced by operational issues, funding demands, and the need to protect drinking water for both homeland security and conventional purposes, enhanced by public support of essential measures needed to ensure a safe and adequate drinking water supply.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The public's role in drinking water security can be strengthened through leveraging their established interest in conventional safety issues. Key issues which must be addressed include public notice, timing of notice, access to information, the relationship between conventional and terrorist threats, and types of homeland security issues affecting drinking water.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Common interests are shared by the public health and drinking water sectors, such as determining the length of time priority agents can survive in water, the susceptibility of priority agents to common water treatments, and the quality of water that must be ingested by an individual to become ill. The public health community is addressing syndromic surveillance of waterborne illnesses, emergency preparedness, engaging health care practitioners in waterborne disease response, linking drinking water with food safety, and facilitating interaction between local health departments and public water suppliers.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

Since September 11th, there has been significant improvement in anti-terrorism detection and treatment technologies, which can also be applied to conventional drinking water needs. Additionally, progress can be achieved through collaboration with other sectors, such as natural disaster response, food safety, and natural gas delivery.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Effective emergency planning, management, and response measures for both natural and accidental disasters prove an essential base for homeland security and drinking water safety. Core personnel, such as law enforcement, first responders, industry, environmental organizations, health care providers, and the media, operate at the state and local levels. Collaboration with this sector can enhance communication, surveillance, and response.

Waterdrop image was kindly provided by ANSTO, the Australian Nuclear Science & Technology Organisation.

Recommendations for Follow-Up Action

	Audience										Vehicles							
	State and Local Governments ¹	Technical Sector ²	Non-Governmental Organizations ³	Academic Institutions	Public Health Sector ⁴	Legal Sector	General Public	Emergency Personnel ⁵	Drinking Water Utilities/ Public Water Suppliers	Videos	Media Announcements ⁶	CD-Roms	International Print Materials ⁷	Stakeholder Dialogues/ Roundtables	Research ⁸	Curriculum Development/ Educational Programs	Mentoring Programs	
Legal Research/Analysis	X	X	X	X	X							X			X			
Public and Stakeholder Education		X	X					X				X	X					
Synergy Between Interests	X										X	X	X					
Site Specific Projects	X	X	X									X	X	X		X		
Accessing Environmental Laws	X																	
Strengthening Public Health Laws	X																	
Engaging Bar Associations				X														
Expanding Prevention Authorities	X	X	X															
Collaborating with Utilities on Risk Characterization and Dual-Purpose Functions		X	X					X				X	X					
Conducting Public Outreach on Security Risks and Dual-Purpose Functions						X					X	X	X					
Conducting Stakeholder Outreach on Security Risks and Dual-Purpose Functions			X								X	X	X					
Increasing Awareness of Improved Technologies	X	X	X					X				X	X					
Engaging Emergency Preparedness Sector	X								X			X	X					
Engaging Public Health Sector	X			X								X	X					
Engaging Remediation Response Sector		X										X	X					
Engaging Natural Disaster Preparedness Sector		X										X	X					
Engaging Food Safety Sector	X		X									X	X					
Mentoring between Small and Large Drinking Water Utilities	X	X	X									X	X	X		X		
Implementing Dual-Purpose Measures	X		X									X	X	X		X		
Engaging the Public in Dual-Purpose Drinking Water Safety and Security	X		X									X	X	X		X		
Integrating Water Security and Public Health	X				X							X	X	X		X		

¹ Public Health Departments, Environmental Agencies
² Trade Associations, Technical Experts, Consultants
³ Environmental Organizations, Faith-Based Organizations, Smart-Growth Organizations, Environmental Justice Organizations
⁴ Health Care Providers, Associations
⁵ First Responders, Emergency Management Personnel, State and Local Emergency Response Commissions
⁶ Public Service Announcements, Press Releases
⁷ Fact Sheets, Brochures, Citizen Guides
⁸ Research, Analysis, Document Production



This fact sheet provides a summary of information on opportunities for constructive interaction that can be fully explored in ELI's report, *Homeland Security and Drinking Water: An Opportunity for Comprehensive Protection of a Vital Natural Resource*. For more information contact B. Suzi Ruhl, Director of ELI's Center for Public Health at ruhl@eli.org, or visit www.eli.org.

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