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# Fact Sheet

## The Drinking Water Academy

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### **WHAT IS THE DRINKING WATER ACADEMY?**

The Drinking Water Academy (DWA) is a long-term training initiative established by the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (OGWDW) to expand EPA's capability to support states and other organizations as they implement the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996. The goal of the Drinking Water Academy is to support implementation by assisting EPA, states and tribes to build program capability to successfully carry out the SDWA requirements. This, in turn, will promote increased program compliance and greater public health protection.

### **WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?**

The DWA was created in response to the far reaching changes brought forth by the 1996 SDWA Amendments. The amendments created new responsibilities and new funding opportunities for EPA and states. As a result, EPA has promulgated and will continue to promulgate new regulations, and has hired new personnel to assist in the implementation of these new requirements. States are required to adopt new comprehensive and integrated authorities and new regulations, place greater emphasis on protecting source waters from contamination, and encourage increased public involvement in ensuring safe drinking water. Furthermore, in addition to maintaining their existing drinking water programs, states have developed new funding programs to provide low-cost loans for the construction of important drinking water infrastructure needs.

### **NEED FOR TRAINING?**

The new requirements and approaches to regulating drinking water systems have increased the need for training of EPA, states, and tribes, particularly for personnel new to SDWA programs. The Academy will help fulfill these needs and sustain a high level of expertise in drinking water programs, which may otherwise be diminished through personnel changes and lack of sustained training. The DWA will help strengthen the knowledge of all staff about statutes, regulations, and program activities which will, in turn, provide greater protection of public health through greater protection of public water supplies. Initially, the Academy will primarily serve EPA staff. Once the Academy has developed a more comprehensive program, it will be expanded to serve states, tribes, and others

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## **WHAT TYPES OF TRAINING NEEDS WILL BE ADDRESSED?**

The DWA curricula are being designed to meet the training needs of SDWA EPA and state program staff responsible for Public Water System Supervision, Underground Injection Control, Ground Water, and Source Water Protection programs. Training will take place through a combination of lectures, workshops, audio-visual techniques, and on-site inspections where appropriate. Field work, where applicable, may include inspections of public water systems and UIC wells. Trainers will have extensive experience with SDWA programs.

## **IS THERE STATE INVOLVEMENT IN THE DWA?**

States are playing an active role in the DWA from the beginning, even though they are not the primary audience initially. The Academy has set up a work group composed of EPA Headquarters and regional staff, and state representatives. The primary mission of the work group is to assist the Academy in prioritizing the type and development of training materials for the Academy and to provide guidance during the drafting and implementation of Academy curricula and training sessions.

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## **HOW CAN I OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION?**

For general information on the SDWA, call the Safe Drinking Water Act hotline at 1-800-426-4791 or (202) 260-7908. For information on the Drinking Water Academy, please visit the DWA website at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/dwa.html> or contact James Bourne at (202) 260-5557 or [bourne.james@epa.gov](mailto:bourne.james@epa.gov).



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## DEFINITION OF A PUBLIC WATER SYSTEM

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The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is publishing, for public comment, draft guidance to the primacy agencies and EPA's regional offices for their implementation of the Safe Drinking Water Act's (SDWA) 1996 Amendments to the definition of a public water system (PWS) in Section 1401(4). This guidance was developed with information from States, water suppliers, and citizens groups.

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### CHANGES TO THE PWS DEFINITION BY THE 1996 AMENDMENTS

**"Constructed Conveyances"** Expands the means of delivering water to include not only systems which provide water for human consumption through pipes, but also systems which provide water for human consumption through "other constructed conveyances."

**Regulation Date** "Constructed conveyance" suppliers newly subject to the PWS definition will not be regulated until August 6, 1998.

**Exclusions** Provides three means by which "constructed conveyance" water systems may be excluded from this definition and two means by which certain piped irrigation districts may be excluded from this definition.

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### GUIDANCE ON IMPLEMENTING THE NEW PWS DEFINITION

**Definitions** *Human Consumption.* Defined to include drinking, bathing, showering, cooking, dishwashing, and maintaining oral hygiene.

*Constructed Conveyance.* Broadly interpreted to refer to any manmade conduit such as ditches, culverts, waterways, flumes, mine drains, or canals.

**Determining Constructed Conveyances** *Natural Waterways.* Factors that a primacy agency should consider to determine whether or not a natural waterway is considered a "constructed conveyance" include whether or not it exists in its current configuration substantially from human modifications, who owns or controls the water, and the reason why water is present.

*Counting.* Whether a "constructed conveyance" counts as a connection depends on whether the water supplier knows or

should know that the connection exists or that the individuals are using the water from that connection for human consumption.

**Water Suppliers' Liability**

A supplier cannot limit its SDWA liability by not making efforts to gather necessary information and documentation regarding its users' water use, or solely by requiring its users to sign a waiver agreement.

**Constructed Conveyance Exclusions**

***Other Than Residential Use Exclusion.*** A "constructed conveyance" system may automatically exclude a connection from being counted if its use is exclusively for purposes other than residential uses.

***Alternative Water Exclusion.*** A "constructed conveyance" system may exclude a connection from being counted if the primacy agency makes a factual determination based on documentation submitted by the water supplier that the water supplier is providing its users at that connection with alternative water that provides the equivalent level of public health protection as the applicable NPDWRs.

***Treatment Exclusion.*** A "constructed conveyance" system may exclude a connection from being counted if the primacy agency makes a factual determination based on documentation submitted by the water supplier that the water at the connection is treated to provide the equivalent level of public health protection as the applicable NPDWRs.

**Piped Irrigation Exclusion**

If in existence prior to May 18, 1994, and providing primarily agricultural service with only incidental residential use, a piped irrigation district may not be considered a PWS if all of its connections comply with the alternative water or treatment exclusions (above) for "constructed conveyance" suppliers.

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EPA has published in the Federal Register the draft guidance and is soliciting comments until June 22, 1998. Copies may also be obtained by calling the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 800-426-4791. Comments should be addressed to Jon Merkle, Drinking Water Office - (WTR-6), EPA Region 9, 75 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, California, 94105. Comments may also be submitted electronically to merkle.jon@epamail.epa.gov.