

WATER CONTAMINANTS

INFORMATION & RESOURCES ON HOW TO KEEP YOUR WATER FREE FROM HEALTH-HARMING CONTAMINANTS

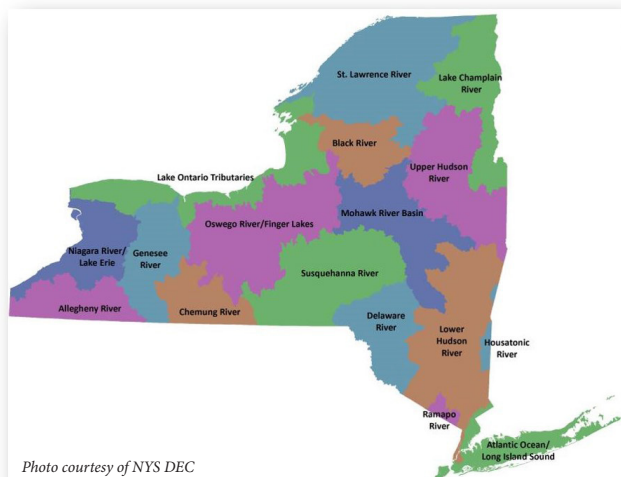


Photo courtesy of NYS DEC

Water, the most important resource to humans on our planet, is so abundant we tend to forget about its role to our very existence. We see water everywhere and never take notice of the glimmer of oil mixed in. How often do we think about the significant impacts agriculture, automobiles, industry, and humans have on our water systems?

We call these water systems **Watersheds**. There are many different watersheds in New York. These impacts to the watershed directly impact the health of our bodies. Water treatment plants exist to help abate these issues, but they cannot effectively treat ALL hazards. This is why it is important that WE safeguard our water and the things that enter into it.

Water systems test regularly for approximately 90 contaminants. The monitoring ensures identification of regulated contaminants at levels which may pose a risk to human health. Despite the efforts of water suppliers, problems with drinking water can and do occur. When problems arise, consumers have a right to know what happened and what they need to do. The public notice requirements of the **Safe Drinking Water Act** require water suppliers to provide this notice.

Examples of Water Contamination in New York State

Love Canal, Niagara Falls

In 1953, the Hooker Chemical Company covered the canal with earth. 82 different compounds, 11 of them suspected carcinogens, percolated upward through the soil.¹

Mohawk & Hudson Rivers

Between 1947 and 1977, General Electric dispensed polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), causing a range of harmful effects. Other kinds of pollution, including mercury contamination and sewage dumping, have also caused problems.²

Petersburgh & Hoosick Falls

Since 2014 residents have been dealing with this issue due to high levels of PFOA. The companies responsible for the contamination in Hoosick Falls have been Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics and Honeywell International. Taconic Plastics was cited as the source of Petersburgh's contamination.³

Newburgh

In 2016, PFOS contamination was found due to fire extinguisher foam used at Stewart Air Force Base.

Bethpage

A toxic plume of volatile organic chemicals was formed decades ago from disposal practices at the Grumman plant where weapons and planes were produced for the Navy. Concerns were raised in 2017.

Common Contaminants

- Lead
- Copper
- Gasoline & Oil
- Fertilizers & Pesticides
- Road Salt (Sodium) & Sand
- Fire Extinguishing Foams (PFOS)
- Industrial Waste (PFOA)
- Arsenic
- Iron
- Mercury
- Chloride
- E. Coli
- Coliforms
- PCB's
- Algae

¹ U.S. EPA ²Wikipedia ³The Trov Record

HOW ACTIVISTS & HOMEOWNERS CAN HELP

AT WORK

- Ask your employer for the latest water test. This is a part of your exposure record and is requestable under the 1910.1020 rules. Employers have 15 working days to provide it.
- Request but don't expect carbon filters and/or a bottled water or water cooler system.
- Report any spills of hazardous materials to local water and health departments.

AT HOME

- Get to know your watershed, local water employees and phone numbers to report information.
- Pay attention to or request your Annual Water Report.
- If you see an oil or gasoline spill, report it.
- Use fertilizers and pesticides sparingly.
- Properly dispose of hazardous and medical waste.
- Do not flush pharmaceuticals down the toilet.
- If someone is in an area of a fire hydrant or a water testing point and shouldn't be, call the authorities.
- Take care of your septic systems, flush them every 3 years.
- Clean up after your pets.
- Check your home for a water softener/ water filtration system. If you are not regularly replacing the filters, bypass them completely to not contaminate yourself or loved ones.
- Get active in community groups and forums around local industrial waste and contamination.

EMPLOYER CONSIDERATIONS

EMPLOYERS MUST:

Maintain potability & prevent back flow.

29 CFR 1910.141 (b)(1)(i)

Potable water shall be provided in all places of employment, for drinking, washing of the person, cooking, washing of foods, washing of cooking or eating utensils, washing of food preparation or processing premises, and personal service rooms.

EMPLOYERS SHOULD:

- Ensure routine housekeeping and clean receptacles frequently.
- Flush lines that are infrequently used.
- Flush lines after repairs and services.
- Have water agreements in leases with building owners.
- Identify spaces where water can stagnate (be trapped).

For more information and resources visit:

www.cseany.org/safety



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