

## Chicago water tested ... by newspaper

Thursday, April 17, 2008

CHICAGO — City officials here are holding to their stance that they won't test the water supply for unregulated chemicals until mandated by the federal government to do so, and now are on the defense as local media reveal exactly what pharmaceuticals the city and suburban water supply contain.

According to an April 17 *Chicago Tribune* article, the newspaper and its *Redeye* edition hired an independent laboratory to test publicly supplied water in and around Chicago because "Chicago officials have never tested the city and suburban water supply for pharmaceuticals and other unregulated chemicals, even as concern grows about the possible health effects of trace amounts of drugs in drinking water."

Test results found parts-per-trillion amounts of an anti-seizure drug, a common painkiller, caffeine, and two chemicals used to make Teflon and Scotchgard in samples taken from a water supply that serves 7 million people.

*Tribune* reporters wrote, "Using sampling techniques and containers provided by the University of Iowa Hygienic Laboratory, *Tribune* reporters took samples on March 17 from drinking fountains at City Hall, Sherman Elementary on the South Side, and the Waukegan Public Library. Water from a tap at Tribune Tower also was filtered through a household filter before collection.

"The water samples were shipped to the Iowa lab and analyzed for nearly 40 different compounds, including regulated pesticides and heavy metals and unregulated prescription and non-prescription drugs."

The good news was that tests did not reveal the presence of most of the contaminants.

*Tribune* reporters said it informed the city about the test results April 3, and city officials have since declined to respond in person or over the telephone. In an e-mail statement, the city said, "The quantities you say were found are extremely minute, and pose no known hazard. Nevertheless, we are aware of this new area of scientific interest, and we are working with government regulators and the scientific community to help develop tests and protocols to ensure the safety of our water source and the treated water we deliver to our customers."

One water operator, Waukegan plant director Jeff Musinski, said Waukegan has not tested its drinking water for the chemicals found in its supply by the recent tests, namely cotinine, a byproduct of nicotine, as well as Teflon and Scotchgard. He said the results are not a problem, and he added, "But it is a problem if your reporting erodes public confidence in our water supply."

Best-selling **bottled water brands** in the region also were tested. No pharmaceuticals were found. A sample of Lake Michigan water, delivered to a tap after passing through a Brita filter, also tested negative, the article said.