

MA lawmakers tackle meds-in-water issue

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BOSTON — State environmental officials testifying before a special Massachusetts legislative committee on May 13 said that more research is needed to understand the possible health effects of trace amounts of pharmaceuticals in drinking water, according to a May 13 Associated Press (AP) report in *The Telegraph*.

Massachusetts lawmakers also were told that the state needs to reduce levels of pharmaceuticals now entering water systems when people flush unused medications down the toilet.

The special hearing was held to address concerns raised in a recent **AP investigation** that reported that at least 41 million Americans in 24 major metropolitan areas receive their drinking water from public supplies containing trace amounts of a variety of human and veterinary drug compounds.

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Laurie Burt, noting that more federal oversight is needed, said during the hearing that the state has launched a number of initiatives to study the problem, including teaming with researchers at the **University of Massachusetts-Amherst** to test raw water samples for 12 different compounds and then test them again after they are treated with chemicals typically used to disinfect public water supplies to see how well they work.

Burt said the state also is cooperating on a national research project by the US Geological Survey that will take samples from surface waters in Massachusetts and scan them for hundreds of compounds. The pharmaceuticals then will be tracked to see what happens to them as the water goes through the treatment process, the report said.

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