

Wyoming officials say water is safe

By The Associated Press

CASPER - A report that pharmaceuticals have been found in the drinking water of some cities isn't raising any concern from state and local officials about Wyoming's water.

Most of the water in Wyoming is not recycled like it is in bigger cities, said Timothy Ryan, environmental public health section chief for the Wyoming Department of Health.

When a person flushes a toilet in Chicago or New York City, the water goes to a plant for cleaning and then is recycled back out, Ryan said.

"Here, it's not going toilet to tap," Ryan said. "It's going from snow to tap."

An investigation by The Associated Press found a vast array of pharmaceuticals, including antibiotics, anticonvulsants, mood stabilizers and sex hormones, in the drinking water supplies of at least 41 million Americans.

Public water officials in Casper and Cheyenne say their systems do not have as much risk for contamination from pharmaceuticals as bigger cities.

David Hill, public utilities manager for Casper, said the city is close to its water source and the vast majority of the water comes from snow.

Clint Bassett, water conservation specialist for the city of Cheyenne, said most of the water in Cheyenne comes directly from the snow that falls on the Snowy and Laramie ranges.

"Since we are the first to use it, there is very little opportunity for drugs to get in it," Bassett said.

Ryan said Wyoming's small population also has the potential to decrease the amount of pharmaceuticals found in the state's drinking water. However, it depends on how many people are dumping their unused medications down the toilet. Ryan said no one knows how widespread the practice is.

Patti Nelson, a staff pharmacist at the Wyoming Medical Center, said she knows several people who have flushed medications down the toilet.