

## Only Tap Water Delivers Public Health

*In a world where an estimated 3 million people die every year from preventable waterborne disease, water systems in North America allow us to drink from virtually any public tap with a high assurance of safety.*

- A safe water supply is critical to protecting the public health – the first obligation of all water suppliers. Without our modern water systems, diseases such as cholera and dysentery would be part of everyday life.
- In the United States, water utilities monitor for more than 100 contaminants and must meet close to 90 regulations for water safety and quality. Those water standards are among the world's most stringent.
- States may also require utilities to meet additional standards.
- Community water supplies are tested every day. Tap water undergoes far more frequent testing than bottled water.
- Many North American water systems add small amounts of fluoride to their water supplies to help prevent tooth decay. Child cavity rates have been reduced by 20-40% where fluoridation has been implemented.

### Did You Know?

Every year, water utilities provide customers with a detailed report on the quality of their drinking water. To find your utility's report, contact your local utility or visit [www.drinktap.org](http://www.drinktap.org).

### UN focuses on safe water in 'Water for Life' decade

- Underscoring the public health value of a safe water supply, the United Nations has dubbed 2005-2015 the 'Water for Life Decade.'
- The UN seeks to reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water by the year 2015.
- "Water and Sanitation is one of the primary drivers of public health. I often refer to it as 'Health 101' ..."

*Dr LEE Jong-wook, Director-General, World Health Organization*



## Only Tap Water Delivers™

### Only Tap Water Delivers Quality of Life

*Tap water is more than a convenience; it is central to our everyday lives.*

- Any measure of a successful society — low mortality rates, economic diversity, productivity, public safety — is in some way related to access to safe water.
- Tap water is so intricately part of our lives that we can hardly imagine a day without it. Without tap water ...
  - ... How would we rinse our produce, clean dishes and clothes, water plants and landscapes and wash our cars?
  - ... Where would we shower?
  - ... How many businesses would have to suspend operations or relocate entirely?
  - ... How would our institutions - from hospitals to firehouses to schools - function?
- Americans tap into about 341 billion gallons of tap water every day. Total water use (both indoor and outdoor) in a typical single-family home is 101 gallons per capita per day.

#### Did You Know?

Only 3 percent of the tap water we use on a typical day is used for drinking. The rest goes for outdoor watering, bathroom uses, clothes washing, etc.

#### Hurricane Katrina underscores value of water

A reliable water supply contributes to our quality of life in so many ways that it is difficult to fully measure. However, it is possible to get a sense by examining what can happen when disaster strikes.

- When Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, more than 1,220 drinking water systems and 200 wastewater treatment facilities were damaged.
- With water service out, urban fires could not be extinguished.
- While bottled water provided emergency drinking water relief, people needed tap water service to clean out homes. Businesses could not return to normal operations until water service was restored.

## Only Tap Water Delivers Fire Protection

*A well-maintained water system is critical in protecting our communities from the ever-present threat of fire.*

- In most communities, water flowing to fire hydrants and home faucets is transported by the same system of water mains, pumps and storage tanks.
- A water system that provides reliable water at a high pressure and volume can be the difference between a manageable fire and an urban inferno.
- The ability to provide water for fire protection heavily influences:
  - new home construction
  - business location decisions
  - insurance rates
- Firefighters are the primary operators of fire hydrants, but your water utility is usually responsible for maintaining the hydrants. That maintenance is supported through our water bills.
- In 2004 alone, U.S. fire departments responded to 1.55 million fires across the country.

### Did You Know?

The original reason for building community water systems wasn't to deliver safe drinking water – it was to fight fires!

### San Francisco inferno showed value of reliable water system

- A 1906 earthquake resulted in a massive inferno.
- Twenty-five thousand buildings burned – 80 percent of the entire property value of the city.
- The city developed, designed and constructed a guaranteed water supply system solely for fighting fires.
- Over the years the system has been improved as the city has grown and rebuilt.
- Today the Auxiliary Water Supply System has over 150 miles of water mains with 1,550 special hydrants – for a city of 47 square miles.