



NEWS

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PHILADELPHIA SELECTED BY EPA AS NATIONAL WATER SAFETY MODEL AWARDED AT LEAST \$2 MILLION IN FUNDING

Philadelphia, February 23, 2009 - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has selected Philadelphia as one of five cities in the nation to serve as a national model for drinking water security. As part of this pilot program the City will receive \$2 million in funding for the development of a "Contamination Warning System." The money will be used to enhance the City's existing online water quality network and develop a consequence management plan. This is the first installment of a potentially much larger grant.

As the City receives additional funding, the scope of the project will expand to include sampling analysis, customer complaint surveillance, enhanced security monitoring, and public health surveillance. These five active monitoring and surveillance components will enhance contamination warning capabilities and the development of a consequence management plan for responding to potential contamination events. Upon project completion, Philadelphia will model its results for other cities so that they may adopt the best practices developed here.

"We are honored that the EPA has recognized the excellent service of the Philadelphia Water Department and has chosen them to be one of five cities in the nation selected to develop a system that will enhance the protection of our drinking water system," said Mayor Nutter. "This project is an example of the Federal and City governments working together to better protect Philadelphia and its citizens."

"Philadelphia was selected for this pilot because of its existing water quality protection programs and its commitment to put in place the complex systems needed to increase water security," said William T. Wisniewski, the U.S. EPA's acting administrator for the mid-Atlantic

The Contamination Warning System will focus on detecting and, in some cases preventing, contamination of the drinking water distribution system. Early detection is critical in responding to incidents of contamination to minimize harm to the public. Communication and coordination among City and other governmental entities to include the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Office of Emergency Management and PA Department of Environmental Protection for example, will help promote early detection. Effective response and communication along with real-time data integration capability across numerous information sources for prompt event detection, represents the foundation of the program.

The other cities selected include New York, San Francisco, Dallas and Cincinnati. This project is expected to yield future technology transfer opportunities and will serve as a model for drinking water utilities across the nation.

The Water Department received vital support from Philadelphia's Congressional Delegation in acquiring this significant grant. It has also received tireless assistance from the PA Department of Environmental Protection and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health.

"We all start our day with drinking water – for brushing teeth, at the breakfast table, in our coffee or tea– and knowing that the water in Philadelphia is safe and contamination-free is nothing to take for granted," said Congressman Chaka Fattah (D-PA). "I'm pleased that as a member of the House Appropriations Committee I have been in a position to support and fund EPA as it guards our environment and advances this vital project for protecting our city's water supply."

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