

EPA Invests \$2 Million To Secure Philadelphia's Drinking Water Supply

Innovative Water Quality Tools to Keep Our Drinking Water Safe

PHILADELPHIA (Feb. 23, 2009) - - Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency presented a \$2 million grant to Philadelphia to help the City address the risk of intentional contamination of its drinking water. The total funding available to the City for this project could be as high as \$9.5 million, contingent upon EPA's budget over the next three years.

The grant will fund the Philadelphia Water Department to pilot monitoring and surveillance components of an early warning system.

"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 region.

The project, called the Water Security Initiative, is expected to serve as a model for the nation's drinking water utilities. Similar water security pilot grants were awarded by EPA to New York City, San Francisco, and Dallas.

The contamination warning system to be developed and evaluated by Philadelphia involves online real-time drinking water monitoring, public health surveillance, laboratory analysis capabilities, enhanced security monitoring and consumer complaint surveillance. The warning system will be designed for long-term operation.

Coordination is critical to effectively detect or respond to contamination incidents. To ensure effective communication and response, Philadelphia's Water Department will collaborate with many city and governmental agencies in this pilot including the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, the Office of Emergency Management and Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection.

The 2,000 men and women who work for the Philadelphia Water Department deliver reliable, high-quality drinking water to more than 1.6 million consumers who live or work in the City of Philadelphia.

For more information about the EPA's Water Security Initiative, visit:
<http://cfpub.epa.gov/safewater/watersecurity/index.cfm>.