

Dear Friend:

In this day and age, no one should worry about what comes out of their faucet or what their children drink. Clean and safe water should flow to every American household, without question. Regrettably, this is not the case today.

Many of us remember what unfolded with MTBE and Chromium 6. Another contaminant, perchlorate, is only now starting to receive the attention it deserves.

Widely used since the Cold War in rocket propellants, perchlorate has seeped into the ground in at least 22 states, including Colorado, Massachusetts and Maryland – and the situation is particularly serious in California.

To address this issue, I have joined with Senators Barbara Boxer and Harry Reid to urge the Department of Defense to take responsibility for this contamination, but thus far the Department has not responded adequately.

I strongly believe that there must be tough state and federal standards regarding perchlorate contamination, and I will continue to press the Administration not only to accept responsibility for this contamination, but to end its infighting and take the lead on what is clearly a national issue.

It is too early to say if perchlorate will pose the same dangers as MTBE or Chromium 6, but it would be a serious mistake if this issue is put on the back burner. This is why concerted national action must be taken now, not several years down the road.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein

# A Legacy of Contamination

The Department of Defense has long been the primary consumer of perchlorate and has been intimately involved in its manufacture and use.

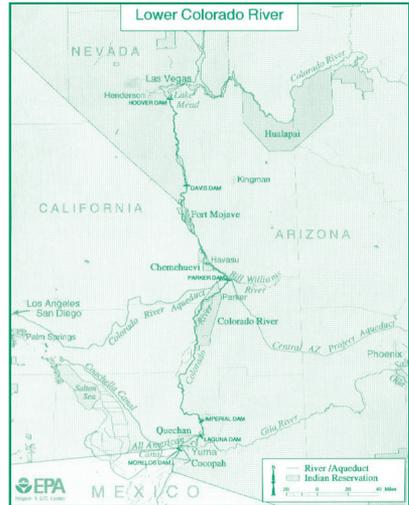
For example, between 1951 and 1962 the U.S. Navy owned and contracted for the operation of the largest perchlorate production facility in the country located in Henderson, Nevada.

Even after relinquishing its ownership of the facility, the Department and its contractors continued to be the primary customers of perchlorate.

Perchlorate, however, from this facility has been leaching into Lake Mead and the Colorado River for half a century, impacting water supplies in California, Arizona and Nevada. While aggressive cleanup efforts are underway at the site, Senator Feinstein is concerned that the Department has not actively engaged in contributing to that cleanup.

The Defense Department has said that it is not willing to start clean-up of perchlorate until there is a national standard, but finalizing the standard is currently projected to take years.

Private parties and drinking water utilities now must adopt costly measures to assure the purity of drinking water supplies, while the Defense Department delays. Companies have already spent millions on priority actions to reduce the threat to Americans - and Senator Feinstein has urged the Defense Department to do so as well.



*Perchlorate has seeped into the Lower Colorado River, the major source of water for 24.8 million people in the Southwest.*

# The Scope of the Problem

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In fact, the more we look for perchlorate contamination, the more we find it. In addition to the site in Henderson, Nevada, perchlorate has been found across the country.

- This includes 329 groundwater wells operated by 84 different local water agencies throughout California. Collectively, these agencies serve more than half of the state's population.

- The problem is particularly acute in the Inland Empire, where a seven mile long plume discovered last year has contaminated 22 drinking water wells in western San Bernardino County, jeopardizing water supplies for approximately 500,000 local residents.

*How serious are the health risks? When ingested, perchlorate can interfere with the iodine intake of the thyroid gland, which regulates our hormones. High doses of perchlorate have also been linked to thyroid tumors, while newborn children and fetuses may be the most vulnerable.*

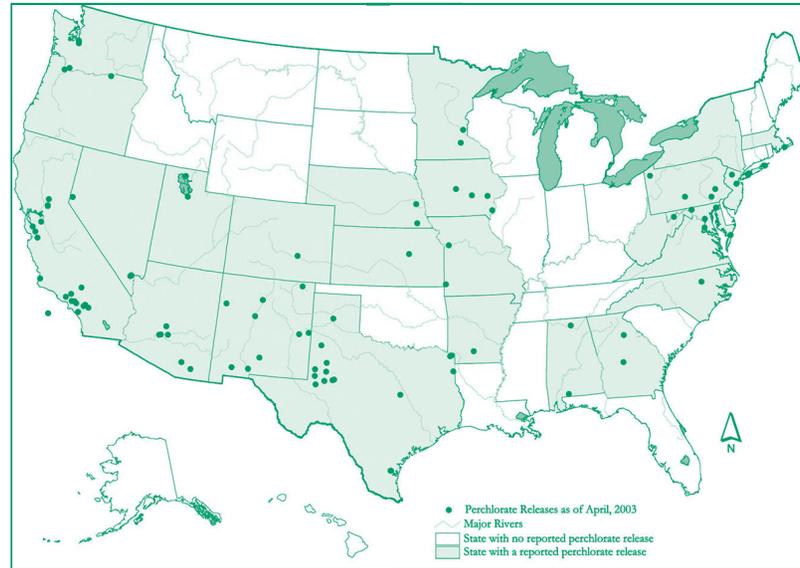
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- Preliminary surveys of Southern California and Arizona grown produce suggest that perchlorate may become concentrated in fruits and vegetables that rely on perchlorate contaminated water from the Colorado River for irrigation. This productive farming area grows much of the Nation's produce, including about 90% of the country's winter lettuce crop. While further study is necessary, these early findings could have serious consequences for both area farmers and consumers nationwide.

# Addressing Perchlorate Contamination

This situation has caused Senator Feinstein great concern, and over the past year, she has repeatedly called on the EPA to set a federal standard for perchlorate contamination and urged the Department of Defense to take responsibility for the contamination it has caused.

- In December 2002, Senator Feinstein asked the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, to assume responsibility for cleaning up perchlorate and requested that EPA Administrator Christine Whitman assist those communities whose drinking wells have been contaminated.
- On December 19, 2002, Senator Feinstein held a perchlorate summit with local, state and federal water officials, as well as regulators, military and other stakeholders in Southern California to determine the scope of the problem, and examine possible solutions.
- In March 2003, Senator Feinstein reiterated her belief that the Department of Defense must lead the cleanup of perchlorate at the Department's facilities and those of its contractors at a hearing of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction.
- In May 2003, the Senate approved a measure, sponsored by Senators Feinstein, Boxer, and Reid, calling on the Department to release a perchlorate survey, which reportedly had been undertaken by the



*Perchlorate has been found in 22 States, and in hundreds of communities.*

Department of Defense in Spring 2001. The full results had not been released to Congress or to the public.

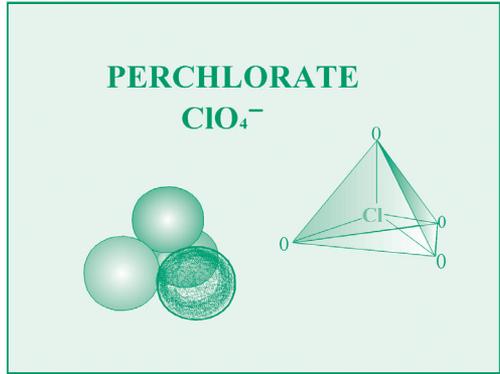
- In May, Senator Feinstein urged the Department of Defense to address the issue of perchlorate contamination on agricultural products including lettuce, and to take responsibility for the contamination that it has caused.
- In June, the Senators received the Defense Department "survey," which turned out to be incomplete and outdated. The study was supposed to have examined perchlorate contamination at all active and closed Defense Department sites, dating back to 1950. The documents delivered to the Senators, however, only included limited information on 305 military bases out of the more than 5,000 installations in existence.
- Furthermore, the Department did not offer any reasoning as to how the bases were chosen and included, or explain the gaps in information. The documents contain no information gathered since August 2001.
- In response to the report, Senator Feinstein urged the Department of Defense to undertake a new, comprehensive perchlorate study or to provide them with all the data and analysis that went into the initial study.

# Setting a Standard

The first step to resolving the problem is for the EPA to set a national standard for perchlorate contamination.

The EPA issued “interim guidance” in 1999, which is merely a recommendation to local agencies on safe levels of perchlorate. Since then, the agency has taken additional steps toward creating a national standard, but has yet to issue a national standard enforceable by law and in the courts.

In June 2003, the EPA referred its own research to the National Academy of Sciences for review. This will cause significant delay in the issuance of a national standard, and the Academy’s review is not expected to be completed before late 2004.



*Senator Feinstein believes it is critical that EPA issue a standard for perchlorate as soon as possible.*

Senator Feinstein strongly believes that the EPA should accelerate its efforts and seek to:

- Identify a safe level of perchlorate in water supplies;
- Assess the extent of perchlorate contamination in water supplies;
- Develop and demonstrate measures to remediate any contamination; and
- Develop a more sensitive test for measuring contamination levels.

Delay is unacceptable to Senator Feinstein because it means that more Americans will be exposed to the potential dangers of perchlorate. This is why she believes we need to determine the extent of the problem and potential solutions as soon as possible, while the scientific controversy over the toxicity of perchlorate is resolved.

# The Defense Department

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In the absence of a national perchlorate standard, the Department of Defense has put off addressing the issue and argued that it does not need to take action.

For more than 50 years, the Department has used perchlorate in rocket fuel, without regard to its impact on the environment and on water supplies.

Senator Feinstein believes that the Department bears significant responsibility to identify and clean up contaminated drinking water.

This is why Senator Feinstein, as ranking member of the Military Construction appropriations subcommittee, will continue to monitor the Department's actions with regard to perchlorate and urge it to take responsibility for its actions.



*Used in rocket fuel since the 50s, perchlorate has contaminated water supplies across the nation.*

# For More Information

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Environmental Protection Agency

<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/ccl/perchlorate/perchlorate.html>

California Department of Health Services

<http://www.dhs.cahwnet.gov/ps/ddwem/chemicals/perchl/perchlindex.htm>

California Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment

<http://www.oehha.ca.gov>

Association of California Water Agencies

<http://www.acwanet.com/issues/waterquality/perchlorate.asp>

Department of Defense – Defense Environmental Network & Information Exchange (DENIX)

<https://www.denix.osd.mil/denix/Public/Library/Water/Perchlorate/perchlorate.html>