

NEWS RELEASE

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Federico Cruz-Uribe, MD, MPH
Director of Health

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Board of Health

- Community Based
- Competitive
- Integrated
- Preventive

Fluoridation/SEPA Study

Tacoma-Pierce County WA - An environmental study released today by Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department has led the department's Director, Federico Cruz-Uribe, MD, MPH, to issue a Determination of Nonsignificance, a finding that fluoridation of the public drinking water will not negatively impact the environment. The department commissioned Adolfson Associates, an independent environmental consulting firm, to investigate the consequence of adding fluoride to drinking water, under Washington's State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA). The SEPA study concluded that there are "no probable significant adverse environmental impacts."

Public concerns raised with the Board of Health about fluoridation resulted in the decision to ask for a SEPA study, fulfilled by completing a "checklist" standardized by the state. The Seattle-based consulting firm reviewed scientific literature and analyzed environmental characteristics of Pierce County to determine whether concentrations of fluoride in this community would negatively impact people, plants, animals or marine life.

"This checklist provides the detailed confirmation of what we've known, that fluoride is perfectly safe to use in preventing dental caries," said Cruz-Uribe.

In Pierce County, Tacoma, Fircrest, Fort Lewis and University Place already add fluoride to public drinking water supplies. The proposed resolution will require water systems serving Lakewood, Puyallup, Bonney Lake, Sumner, Milton, Edgewood, Parkland, Firgrove, Summit, Southwood, Fruitland and Spanaway to bring fluoride up to optimal levels. Concentrations between 0.8 and 1.3 mg/liter have proven effective for preventing tooth decay.

The health department now begins a fourteen-day public comment period on the SEPA checklist. Copies of the checklist are available for \$4.20 by contacting Cheryl Rexroat at the health department (253 798-2899), or Diana Sutherland at Adolfson Associates, (206 789-9658). The health department will also post the SEPA document on the department's website (www.tpchd.org) and make it available at the Tacoma Public Library Main Branch. The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department anticipates presenting the fluoridation resolution, including an Implementation Plan, at a future Board of Health meeting.

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