



# U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS BALTIMORE DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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USACE CONTACT: Tom Jacobus  
PHONE: (202) 764-0031 FAX: (202) 764-2593  
E-MAIL: Thomas.P.Jacobus@usace.army.mil  
USACE CONTACT: Chanel S. Weaver  
PHONE: (410) 962-2809 FAX: (410) 962-3990  
E-MAIL: Chanel.Weaver@usace.army.mil  
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### Brief Filter Problem at the McMillan Water Treatment Plant

**Washington, DC.** -- The Washington Aqueduct's McMillan Water Treatment Plant briefly did not meet the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standard for filtered water turbidity on Dec. 22, 2008. Turbidity is a measure of the cloudiness of the water. The standard is for filtered water to be consistently at or below 1.0 turbidity units. During a 14-minute period in the evening of Dec. 22, this limit was exceeded by a small amount because of the malfunction of the filter valves. Washington Aqueduct continually analyzes and records filtered water turbidity, which made it possible to detect the problem immediately and take action to overcome the equipment problem that created it.

EPA Region III, regulating agency for Washington Aqueduct, determined that this event constituted a violation of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, requiring notification to customers within 30 days. This event did not require immediate public notification or any specific action by the public.

Turbidity has no health effects; however, turbidity can interfere with disinfection and acts as an indicator that disease-causing organisms may have been able to pass through the filters. The short duration of this event and the relatively small amount of inadequately filtered water combined to minimize the risk to consumers. The treatment plant quickly returned to normal operation, and the water produced subsequently by Washington Aqueduct meets all EPA standards.

Washington Aqueduct provides wholesale water service to the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (DC WASA), Arlington County and the City of Falls Church service area in Virginia. Washington Aqueduct alerted each of its wholesale customers on Dec. 23 and, on Dec. 30, provided them the official written notice attached to this news release. Each of the wholesale customers will, in turn, send a notification to their potentially affected customers, and the event will be recorded in the annual Consumer Confidence Report.

Systems affected include DC WASA, the City of Falls Church water system, the Willston area water system in Arlington and the Town of Vienna's water system. Both the Willston and Town of Vienna systems are directly served via the City of Falls Church's water system.

"We regret any inconvenience and concern that this event has caused our customers," said Tom Jacobus, general manager of Washington Aqueduct. "The safe and reliable operation of the water treatment plants is our highest priority."

For more information, contact Tom Jacobus, general manager of the Washington Aqueduct, at (202) 764-0031 or Thomas.P.Jacobus@usace.army.mil.