



# Providing Safe Drinking Water in America: 2005 National Public Water Systems Compliance Report - Fact Sheet

**What is the scope of the report?** The report is the tenth in a series (beginning with calendar year 1996) of annual reports from EPA. The National Public Water System Compliance Report for 2005 describes how the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and its state and tribal partners are meeting the goal of ensuring that Americans receive safe drinking water from public water systems (PWS). The report also discusses the data we use to measure our success and the progress we are making in our efforts to increase its reliability and completeness.

Additionally, the report summarizes PWS compliance in Indian country, including violations on Indian reservations, EPA's enforcement and compliance assistance activities with respect to Tribal PWS, and the financial assistance EPA has provided to facilitate the provision of safe drinking water to Tribes. Appendix B of the report summarizes, in table format, the annual reports that each State must prepare discussing drinking water violations at PWS in their jurisdictions.

**Who are the potential users of the report?** The target audiences for the report are State and EPA drinking water regulators and environmental professionals. Others who may find value in this report include anyone else who may be interested in a summary of PWS compliance.

## PWS COMPLIANCE

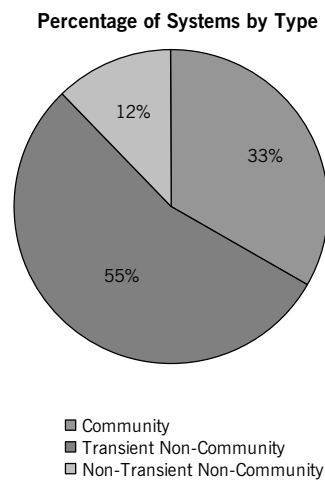
The report concludes that most Americans received drinking water from public water systems that recorded no significant violations in 2005. The states, territories, and tribes did not report a violation of a health-based standard for 93% of America's public water systems, and 72% of the population is served by public water systems which did not have any reported significant violations in 2005.

This report uses information from the Federal Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS/FED), the national database in which EPA records information the states are required to report on PWS compliance. For the national public water system compliance reports, EPA examines SDWIS/FED records of violations of primary drinking water regulations that specify: 1) the maximum permissible level of a contaminant in water that is delivered to any user of a public water system (Maximum Contaminant Level or MCL); 2) techniques for treating water to

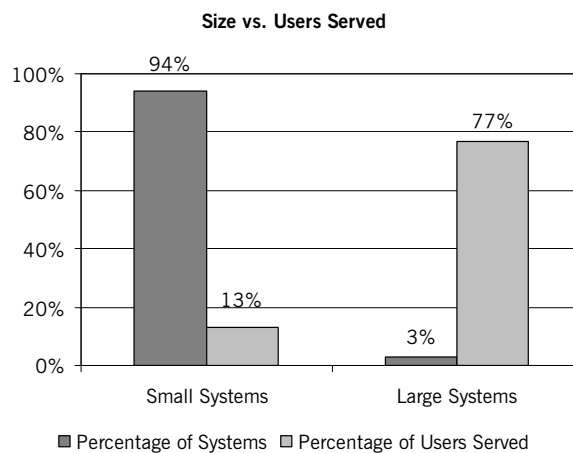
make it safe; 3) monitoring and reporting requirements (how and when water must be tested and the results reported); and 4) significant user notification violations.<sup>1</sup> While SDWIS/FED collects information on monitoring and reporting violations, only “significant” monitoring and reporting violations are counted in this report. A “significant” monitoring and reporting violation occurs, with rare exceptions, when no samples are taken or no results are reported during a compliance period.

## **National PWS Universe Summary**

In 2005, 157,857 public water systems together served over 303 million users. The actual number of individuals served was smaller, because millions of Americans drank water from, and were counted as users by, more than one public water system during the course of the year.



Most public water systems were small, but large systems served a majority of the people who drank water from a public water system.

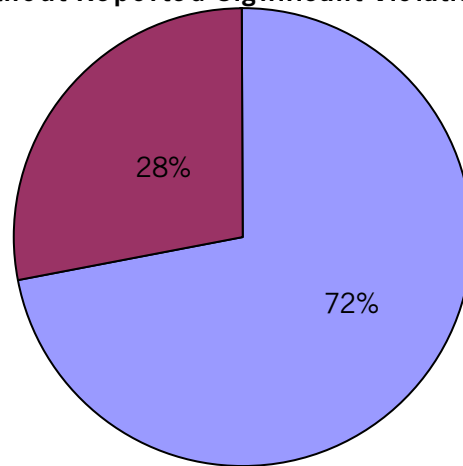


<sup>1</sup> This report tabulates only “significant” monitoring and reporting and notification (e.g., CCR) violations. Table A-1 of the National Public Water System Compliance Report presents descriptions of significant monitoring violations for the different drinking water regulations.

## **National Compliance Summary**

- The vast majority of the 111,021 violations (there may be more than one violation at each noncomplying system) the states reported to SDWIS/FED in 2005 were for a public water system's significant failure to monitor and report, rather than health-based MCL or treatment technique violations detected and reported by a system.
- 93% of America's public water systems reported no violations of a health-based drinking water standard in 2005. The Maximum Contaminant Level for the Total Coliform Rule (TCR) is the health-based standard most frequently violated.
- 72% of the population served by public water systems received drinking water from a system that reported no violations of a health-based standard, was not cited for a significant violation of a monitoring and reporting requirement, and issued a consumer confidence report, if required.

**Percentage of Population Served by PWS  
Without Reported Significant Violation**



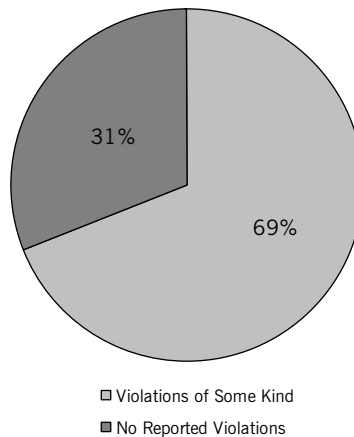
- Users Served by PWS without Reported Significant Violation
- Users Served by PWS with Reported Significant Violation

- EPA designated 13,070 PWS as significant noncompliers. Over 90% of these systems served 3,300 or fewer users. During the 2005 calendar year, States and EPA addressed 5,583 significant noncompliers (SNCs).

## **Findings for Indian Country**

- In 2005, 828 public water systems in Indian country served 821,646 users.
- 93% of the public water systems in Indian country were small (serving 3,300 or fewer users).
- 571 of the 828 PWS had health-based or significant reporting violations.

Systems with Reported Significant Violations



- 88% of public water systems in Indian country reported no violations of a health-based drinking water standard in 2005.
- 60% of violations reported in 2005 were for a public water system's significant failure to monitor and report, rather than for a health-based MCL or a treatment technique violation detected and reported.

## **Data Quality Summary**

The data used in this report came from EPA's national SDWIS/FED database. SDWIS/FED is composed of data that primacy states are required to submit to SDWIS/FED each quarter. EPA periodically conducts data verifications (independent, on-site audits) of primacy state and tribal drinking water programs to ensure that the primacy state is determining compliance in accordance with Federal regulations. EPA's review showed that the quality of the information the states reported to SDWIS/FED is improving, but the data are incomplete. This finding principally reflects differences between state and EPA regulatory interpretation rather than a preponderance of data management issues.

EPA's analysis of the data verifications found:

- 87% of all inventory data in SDWIS/FED were consistently reported.

- Most of the discrepancies between apparent and reported violations are because violations were not reported into the data system.
- 29% of monitoring and reporting violations had been reported to SDWIS/FED.
- 62% of the MCL/treatment technique violations had been reported to SDWIS/FED.

### **Conclusions/Recommendations**

Most Americans received water from systems for which the states reported no violations of health-based standards, and for which the states reported no significant violations of monitoring and reporting requirements.

States and EPA should continue working together to address significant violations of drinking water requirements. In addition, EPA should continue to work with its state partners to identify and resolve any problems that may have produced data discrepancies and to ensure that complete and accurate documentation is available. Working closely with the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators (ASDWA), EPA will continue to implement its updated 2006 Data Reliability Analysis and Action Plan (DRAAP). One of the goals is to achieve 90% complete and accurate data for health-based violations, as well as improving the quality of monitoring and reporting violations and inventory data. EPA should continue efforts to modernize the SDWIS database to reduce data quality problems from data entry to transmission in the future.

#### **Where is the report available?**

**Electronic:** An electronic version of the report is available on EPA's website containing compliance data and other information about Local Government Services and Operations: <http://cfpub.epa.gov/compliance/resources/reports/accomplishment/sdwa/>

**Paper Copy:** A limited number of hard copies of the report are available from the National Service Center for Environmental Publications (NSCEP) located in Cincinnati, Ohio. The report (Document Number: EPA 305-R-08-001) can be ordered online at <http://www.epa.gov/ncepihom/index.htm> or by calling (800) 490-9198.