



**Senator Feinstein Raises Questions about EPA's Process
to Establish Perchlorate Reference Dose**
June 8, 2005

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today asked Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Stephen Johnson a series of questions about the process the agency used to establish the reference dose for perchlorate ingestion.

In January 2005, the National Academy of Sciences recommended a reference dose for perchlorate exposure (the amount that is believed to be safe to consume per individual at a given body weight per day). In February 2005, EPA issued a reference dose, without any comment from the general public or the scientific community.

Following is Senator Feinstein's letter to Administrator Johnson:

"I am writing you regarding the process that led the EPA to adopt the perchlorate reference dose (RfD) that was recommended by the National Academy of Science in the report on the 'Health Implications of Perchlorate Ingestion' released in January 2005.

Concerns have been raised in a recently published article in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives* titled 'The NAS Perchlorate Review: Questions Remain about the Perchlorate RfD' and in an article by the *Riverside Press-Enterprise* regarding how the results of a perchlorate study on human subjects were interpreted and whether the uncertainties in the data from that study were appropriately treated. This study, known as the Greer study, became in part the basis for the RfD that the NAS ultimately recommended in their report.

In February 2005 the EPA announced that it was adopting the NAS recommended RfD. This value was adopted and placed on the EPA's Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) database rather quickly with no further public review.

I am always delighted when a government agency moves quickly, however I have a few questions regarding how the process to establish the reference dose proceeded:

- **How did the EPA come to the decision to endorse the NAS-derived RfD?**
- **How did the EPA determine that this level would protect public health with a reasonable margin of safety?**
- **Why did the EPA decide not to allow for public comment on this decision?**

- **Will the EPA be re-evaluating this reference dose in light of the concerns regarding the Greer perchlorate study?**

As you may know, in California over 350 water sources have been contaminated by perchlorate. Perchlorate has been found in the drinking water sources of at least 34 states and it has been found in lettuce, dairy milk and even women's breast milk.

With such widespread contamination in my state and across the country, I have serious concerns over the health and well-being of the most vulnerable among the population - infants, toddlers, pregnant women and their unborn children, and those with compromised immune systems. This is a national problem that requires federal leadership.

While I believe the EPA should move forward as soon as practicable to establish a national drinking water standard for perchlorate that provides guidance to states that are faced with perchlorate contamination in their water supplies, my hope is that the EPA will do so with a reference dose that appropriately characterizes the risk of perchlorate for the most vulnerable.

I appreciate your immediate attention to this issue and look forward to your response.”

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