

Ted Hyatt, Manager

Arab Water Works  
526 Cullman Road  
Arab, AL 35016  
(256)586-3159

---

## PRESS RELEASE - September 14, 2015

---

In April of this year, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) proposed a recommendation to decrease the amount of fluoride from the current range of 0.7-1.2 milligrams to a set 0.7 milligrams per liter of water. This updated recommendation is based on recent EPA and HHS scientific assessments to balance the benefits of preventing tooth decay while limiting any unwanted health effects. There are several reasons for the change. One reason being that the public has access to more sources of fluoride than they did when water fluoridation was first introduced. Examples being dental products (toothpaste and fluoride rinse), prescription fluoride supplements, and fluoride applied by dental professionals.

Following the proposed recommendation of HHS to reduce the level of artificial fluoride, Arab Water Works began to investigate this recommendation and whether there were any available alternatives; one of which was to cease adding the artificial fluoridation to the water supply. There are numerous research studies with conflicting data and recommendations regarding whether the dental health benefits achieved by adding artificial fluoride to the water supply outweighs the possible negative health implications to the human body. In its review of this topic, AWW contacted the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), researched the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations, researched what other water supply utilities were doing in Alabama and across the U.S. regarding water supply fluoridation, and reviewed several research studies regarding the dental health benefits versus the possible negative health consequences.

AWW confirmed there is no state or federal regulatory requirement to add artificial fluoride to the water supply and whether to add artificial fluoride to the water supply is strictly voluntary. According to the Center of Disease Control (CDC), of the 538 public water systems in Alabama 271, or roughly half, of the public water systems in Alabama do not add artificial fluoride to their water supply. Fluoride is a naturally occurring substance and already present in virtually all water, usually at very low levels. The research studies regarding the dental health benefit versus the possible negative health consequences are conflicting, including their recommendations of whether artificial fluoride should continue to be added to the water supply.

In consideration of the information reviewed by AWW regarding artificial fluoridation of the water supply, AWW determined the best approach for the benefit of its customers and the public was to cease adding the artificial fluoride to the water supply. After all required and recommended notifications, including notification to ADEM, the county health department, and its wholesale customers, AWW ceased adding artificial fluoride in August of this year. AWW has invested millions of dollars in treatment facilities and methods over the past 20 years in an effort to successfully exceed the water quality standards required by state and federal regulatory authorities. AWW views the removal of artificial fluoride, a non-mandated inorganic compound with conflicting views of the benefits and detriments of being added to a water supply system, to be another step toward continuing improvement of the high quality of the water supply delivered daily to its customers and the public.