

DAAAlert...to Local and State Governments



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Conservation Issue

Policy Change for Apartment Submetering Finalized

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has finalized a change in regulatory policy for apartment water use. In order to help apartment dwellers save water and encourage submetering by apartment owners, the EPA revised its current policy regarding submetering of residential properties.

The EPA has previously stated under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), Section 1411, the national primary drinking water regulations apply to all public water systems (PWS). A PWS is defined as one that has its own water source, treats or "sells" water. Before the change, any building or property owner that received water from a regulated public water system and billed tenants separately for this water was "selling" the water and therefore independently subject to SDWA's drinking water requirements.

As a way to encourage more residential submetering, the EPA proposed removing the potential regulatory burden currently faced by apartment building owners who install submeters and bill tenants separately for water. Under the revised policy, a property owner who installs submeters to accurately track usage of water by tenants on his or her property is not subject to SDWA regulations solely as a result of taking the action to submeter and bill. It is now recognized that the water being provided already meets drinking water standards because the water is coming from a regulated public water system.

"Throughout the country, submetering of apartment buildings has been found to be an effective but little-used tool to support water conservation," said G. Tracy Mehan, III, EPA Assistant Administrator. "For those 15% of Americans who live in apartments, submeters are needed if their water consumption is to be linked to prices. The use of water meters by which to measure consumption is a necessary prerequisite to using these price mechanisms."

The proposed policy change was published in the Federal Register (FR) on August 28, 2003, and after the 60-day comment period was accepted. To access the final FR Document go to www.archives.gov/federal_register (Volume 68, Number 246.) For more information contact Ronald Bergman at bergman.ronald@epa.gov.

More information on water efficiency can be found at the EPA's web site at www.epa/owm/water-efficiency. For information on billing and water rates contact Bill Aden (baden@daa.com) at (540) 552-0444 or Sheryl Stephens ([sstephens@daa.com](mailto:ssstephens@daa.com)) at (804) 264-2228.

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