



**American Water Works
Association**

Public Affairs Advisory

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The Authoritative Resource on Safe Water®

Public Affairs Advisory

**TO: AWWA Leadership
All Utilities**

FROM: Jack W. Hoffbuhr

DATE: April 24, 2007

Who:	USA Today and news services
What:	Stories suggesting chlorine bombs pose terror risk in U.S.
When:	Today

Water systems should be aware of stories in today's [USA Today](#) and [Associated Press](#) mentioning some thefts and attempted thefts of chlorine tanks in California. These stories go on to suggest that the possibility of an attack using chlorine truck bombs in the United States is an increasing concern for Homeland Security.

The USA Today coverage points out that at least five chlorine truck bombs have been used in Iraq in the past few months and quotes Robert Stephan, Homeland Security assistant secretary for infrastructure protection, as saying, "This is now being used as a tactic against us in another part of the world. We've got to be prepared for it."

The Associated Press story points out that new federal regulations do not "require or encourage chemical facilities to switch from potentially dangerous chemicals to less hazardous substitutes." The report highlights a letter from four Democratic Congressional representatives to Homeland Security chief Michael Chertoff suggesting the chlorine attacks underscore the need for water treatment facilities to use disinfectants other than chlorine gas.

Due to the increased media attention being placed on chlorine, water and wastewater utilities should be prepared for inquiries from news outlets and consumers on their disinfection practices and security measures. AWWA provides the attached talking points to assist utilities in communicating on this issue.

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Suggested Talking Points

1. [Our water utility] is committed to ensuring public health protection while minimizing risks associated with transporting and storing chemicals.
2. Water providers use disinfectants to inactivate harmful microorganisms during the treatment process and to prevent contamination while the finished water is in the distribution system. While no single disinfectant is right for all systems, chlorine is necessary and required by state and federal regulations for all drinking water systems using surface water, and based on new federal regulations, for some systems using groundwater.
3. Water utilities completed vulnerability assessments as required by law and identified areas where security could be improved. Utilities completed that process and invested an estimated \$2 billion in physical security upgrades. They also closely examined security related policies and procedures to determine where they could be improved, such as the procedures related to receiving and handling chemicals and made adjustments where appropriate.
4. A growing number of utilities are exploring the use of alternative disinfectants to reduce disinfection byproducts and reduce security risks. Decisions about which disinfectant to use must be made locally. Those decisions must take into account several factors, including source water quality, water treatment goals, regulatory requirements and storage capacity. Cost must also be examined, but it is just one of many considerations when determining the best way to assure safe water.

Please contact Greg Kail, senior public affairs manager, at 303-734-3410 or gkail@awwa.org if you have any questions.