

## How Pure is Your Water?

For decades, when you talked about water purity, you automatically thought about drinking water and pool water sanitation issues, most involving e-coli. An organization in Tennessee recently reported that their well water was contaminated with TCE, an industrial cleaner. Although TCE will eventually evaporate out of the pool water, decontaminating the drinking and shower water could prove difficult and expensive. Plus, it's a public relations nightmare. This isolated incident of water contamination is the tip of the iceberg in terms of emerging environmental risk management issues organizations will face over the next few years.

Contaminated drinking water could potentially shut a facility down. Depending on the contaminant, a viable or affordable filtration system to purify the water may be unavailable. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is tasked with establishing safe contaminate levels for ground water, and has published a Citizen's Guide to Ground Water Protection on their web site ([www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)).

The legal and insurance ramifications for having contaminated ground water are enough to create a Hollywood movie. Insurance policies typically exclude environmental pollution on both the general liability and property policies. Without this ability to transfer the risk for this exposure, facilities should be even more proactive about managing the risk.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Test your well water for bacteria, heavy metals, industrial chemicals, and other pollutants. You need to find out if you have a problem as early as possible.
- Talk with your state water control authorities to learn if any ground water contamination has occurred in your area.
- Determine the specific contaminants for which the state tests.
- Find out if your state has any funding for water quality monitoring, including lakes and other aboveground water sources, on your site.
- Talk with a professional about water purification or filtration systems. You may not need their products now, but having an idea of the costs and specifications of various equipment options might assist in your long-term budgeting.
- Write your state representatives about your concerns with ground water contamination. Legislation they write can impact not only the monitoring of the water, but possibly provide funds for problems that are found.