

# 5% Get Bad Water, U.S. Finds

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Five Americans in 100 may be drinking hazardous or potentially hazardous water, according to a new federal survey of nearly a tenth of the nation's drinking water supply.

Two of these five, the Bureau of Water Hygiene reported yesterday, are drinking water with more than the Public Health Service's "mandatory" limit of lead, a subtle and dangerous poison.

Two of these are drinking water with more than mandatory limits of bacterial contamination from human or natural excrement.

Others are drinking water with hazardous amounts of such pollutants as arsenic, chromium and selenium. Eleven per cent of those surveyed are drinking water of "inferior" quality—safe but smelly or bad tasting or including various undesirable constituents.

The findings are the result

of a 1969 survey of nine areas inhabited by almost 18.2 million people. Federal officials called the survey "reasonably representative" of the national picture.

"Most of America's water supply is safe and most of the problems are in small towns and villages except for vari-

ance in water quality in the entire state of Vermont, officials of the bureau reported.

But the areas of San Bernardino, Riverside and Ontario, Calif.; Pueblo, Colo., and Charleston, S.C., also showed a larger than average number of problems.

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## WATER, From A1

The areas surveyed were Vermont, the three above and the New York metropolitan area (New York City and Rockland, Westchester, Nassau and Suffolk Counties); Charleston, W.Va., Cincinnati, Kansas City, Mo., and New Orleans.

All systems serving cities of 100,000 or more met "mandatory" water quality standards. But 27 per cent of these failed to meet "recommended" standards.

This included the water systems of Kansas City, New Rochelle, N.Y., and Burlington, Vt.

Other failing to meet the

"recommended" standard included three water companies serving over 100,000 people in New York City (New York City Water Co., Jamaica Water Co. and the Utilities and Industries Corp. of Woodhaven), the Long Island Water Co. in Nassau County and the Bay Shore and Babylon service areas of Suffolk County.

"All Good" Just the same, said William Long, deputy director of the water hygiene bureau, Kansas City's water system was "about as good as any, and all the major cities surveyed were good . . ."

Of systems serving 500 to

100,000 persons, however, 11 per cent failed to meet mandatory standards and 23 per cent failed recommended standards.

The poorest area surveyed—surprisingly—was Vermont.

Of 217 water supplies in that largely rural, agricultural state, only 10 (serving 17,868 people) were rated "good." Sixty-nine (serving 40,820) were rated "poor," and two (serving 35,555) "undesirable."

The problem, said officials, is that despite Vermont's small population and natural beauty, "monitoring raw water quality is not practiced" for most of the state.

Health and water engineer-

ing is sparse, and "the prevailing attitude of the water consumer"—says a regional report on the Vermont problem—"is that his water supply is the best in the world and is too good to be chlorinated or treated in any way."

Of the entire country, the report said: "The deficiencies" (in personnel and equipment) "identified with most water systems justify real concern over the ability of most to deliver adequate quantities of safe water in the future."

### General Facts

Most of these general facts were contained in a few summary documents made available to reporters on short notice yesterday by press officers of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

But the details on the nine areas examined — and name of offending systems and cities — were buried in nine

massive regional documents, made available only on request.

Quick examination showed that many systems surveyed had lead, arsenic and copper levels above mandatory standards.

The New York area had 10 sites above standards for lead and 11 for copper; Vermont, seven for lead, six for copper; California, four for lead, four for arsenic, three for copper; the Kansas City area, two for lead, one for copper; Pueblo, one for lead; New Orleans, one for copper; and West Virginia, one for copper.

These hazardous metals come from pipes in homes or water systems, from natural sources or from industrial pollution.

Officials of some 23 states have been shocked to find unacceptable amounts of industrial mercury in fish or waters, and they now are checking fish for lead, arsenic and other poisons. Mercury was not measured in the 1959 study, but is being sought.