

Is POU/POE Treatment the Next Apple?

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You know how people wish they had bought stock in Apple Inc. back in 2002 when it was \$7 a share? How they wish they had gotten in at "the ground level" before the company became the giant it is today?

Now could be "the ground level" for the point-of-use/point-of-entry (POU/POE) water treatment industry.

We've known for a while that centralized treatment has its limitations, and research continues to confirm it (Salehi, et. al, 2020). We've also known that in a number of cases, POU/POE treatment can be both a stopgap measure and, in some cases, the long-term solution to protect people's health. Lately, we've been seeing more examples of regulators, municipal officials, and public health professionals coming to the same conclusion.

- Newark, NJ, turned to POU filters when the lead levels in the city's drinking water spiked.
- For PFAS and nitrates, U.S. EPA research concluded that POU treatment is more cost effective for small public systems (<200 homes) (Speth, 2020)
- Research at the University of Arizona concluded that POU treatment is more cost effective for lead for small systems (Verhougstraete, 2019)
- The updates proposed to the U.S. EPA Lead/Copper rule include POU/POE treatment as **permanent** compliance solutions for schools
- California is working on a project called SAFER to improve water quality for underserved communities, and they're looking at POU/POE treatment as an option*

Michigan has set an MCL for PFAS and is requiring that even non-transient non-community systems (NTNC) begin testing for that class of contaminant. And when they find it (and they very likely will) they'll have to treat for it. NTNC systems range in size but many of them are schools, daycare centers, and houses of worship. They're going to be in the market for ROs and POE anion exchange systems, service contracts, and knowledgeable advice.

These are just some of the examples where POU/POE treatment is becoming a needed and preferred solution.

We recently put out a 30-question challenge test and asked industry personnel to take it. It was for fun and to give participants an opportunity to see where they stand. We pulled questions from the annual WQA education kits offered to our certified professionals for continuing education credit.

We saw some impressive scores. But the question missed the most had to do with drinking water regulation. It asked what limits are applied when the U.S. EPA sets the MCL. As an industry we know our softeners, filters, and ROs. We know safe installation. We even know a good deal of water chemistry. But if we don't know how the U.S. EPA regulates drinking water, then we can't speak the same language as the regulators and health department professionals who need partners in the effort to improve drinking water quality.

Know what else the regulators and health departments are looking for? Credentials. And we all know that as important as a plumbing license is to public health, when it comes to treating drinking water contaminants, it's often not enough.

WQA has made purposeful changes to the professional certification requirements to ensure and demonstrate that our certified personnel know what a Primary Drinking Water Standards list is, how to select the right technology to address the contaminants on that list, how to size and install the equipment, and how to service it. All of this together ensures that the equipment continues to reduce contaminants and protect the people using the water.

WQA's Government Affairs team has made great strides in the last number of years to build relationships at the federal and at the state level to promote the expertise of our industry. Technical Affairs and the Professional Certification departments are actively building relationships with small systems regulators and health department professionals, bringing awareness of our professional certification program.

And when the health departments and regulators go to the Certified Professionals list at wqa.org, will they find your name? Will you be in at the ground level?

To get started with WQA's Professional Certification, go to wqa.org/profcert.

*Hear more about the SAFER program at WQA's Mid-Year Leadership conference, taking place September 17 & 18, 2020. Register at wqa.org/MYLC.

References:

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