

# Eugene not affected, EWEB official says

## National water purification proposed

From ASSOCIATED PRESS Reports

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Wednesday proposed new regulations designed to purify the nation's drinking water by removing cancer-causing and poisonous chemicals.

But Eugene's water supply is relatively free of harmful organics and probably won't be affected by the proposed regulations, said a Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB) official.

The proposed regulations call for some drinking water to be filtered through activated carbon, a process designed to remove synthetic organic chemicals, and for restrictions on the level of trihalomethanes or THMs in drinking water.

Some THMs such as chloroform are known to cause cancer in laboratory animals.

Tom Santee, EWEB's commun-

ity information officer, explained, "The McKenzie River is not heavy in organics, and as a result, our water is quite pure."

"We feel our water quality is such that (the EPA proposed regulations) won't apply to us."

EPA Administrator Douglas Costle emphasized that the effort to remove harmful organic chemicals "is not a panic situation." He described it as an "insurance policy" designed to prevent long-term exposure to small amounts of drinking water contaminants.

Costle said the allowable level of THMs in drinking water will be no higher than 100 parts per billion under the proposed regulations.

THMs often are formed when chlorine, used to kill bacteria in water, combines with organic substances found in water.

Both proposals initially apply only to water systems supplying water to over 75,000 persons.

However, water systems supplying more than 10,000 persons will have to monitor the THM standard for a year.

"Smaller systems will be phased into the program as soon as it is feasible, based on experience gained in carrying out this first phase," Costle said.

Carbon filters or an equally effective substitute would be required for all cities over 75,000 within five years after the regulations become effective. The regulation will become effective in about six months, after the EPA has received public comment, Costle said.

"The proposed program marks the start of the first large-scale effort in history to deal with organic chemical contaminants in drinking water," Costle noted.

Victor Kimm, EPA's deputy administrator for water supply, has said that up to 78 cities may have to convert their traditional sand filtration systems to charcoal-filtration to meet the regulations.

Kimm said last month no list had been drawn up, but in general those areas needing to convert would be "big cities along dirty rivers."

Although Santee agreed many cities need new water purification systems, he hoped the EPA wouldn't institute sweeping regulations for all cities above 75,000 residents.

"If they consider population and existing water quality, we probably won't have to comply. We have an excellent water source."

The cost nationwide for converting to charcoal filtration has been estimated at between \$291 million

and \$685 million for initial construction and \$34 million to \$92 million a year for operation.

Some communities say charcoal filtration is too expensive, and the regulations may spark opposition from financially pressed cities, which will have to pass the costs on to consumers in the form of higher water bills.

The EPA has estimated converting to charcoal-filtration for a city of 80,000 residents would cost \$2 million to \$5 million and raise a user's annual water bill by between \$3.80 and \$11.

Santee, however, said EWEB hasn't examined the possible costs yet, but he was astounded at the EPA's estimate.

## A few choice words foil robbery attempt

A University student used a few choice words — in Swedish — to foil a robbery attempt Wednesday on campus.

Ken Leese, a pre-med freshman, says he was in a second-floor bathroom in Oregon Hall when a man with a gun entered, shoved him against the wall and said, "Okay, let's have it."

"I just played dumb," Leese says. "I fumbled around with everything I had in my pockets, then I started rattling off the few Swedish words I know."

The startled robber "looked at me for about five seconds and said, 'Aw, bleep this' and just went out quietly, obviously crushed and discouraged," says Leese.

He got the idea from his older brother, who used the same trick at the San Francisco International Airport, speaking Japanese, after returning from Japan with \$600 in his pocket.

Although he isn't, Leese says, "I look Swedish."

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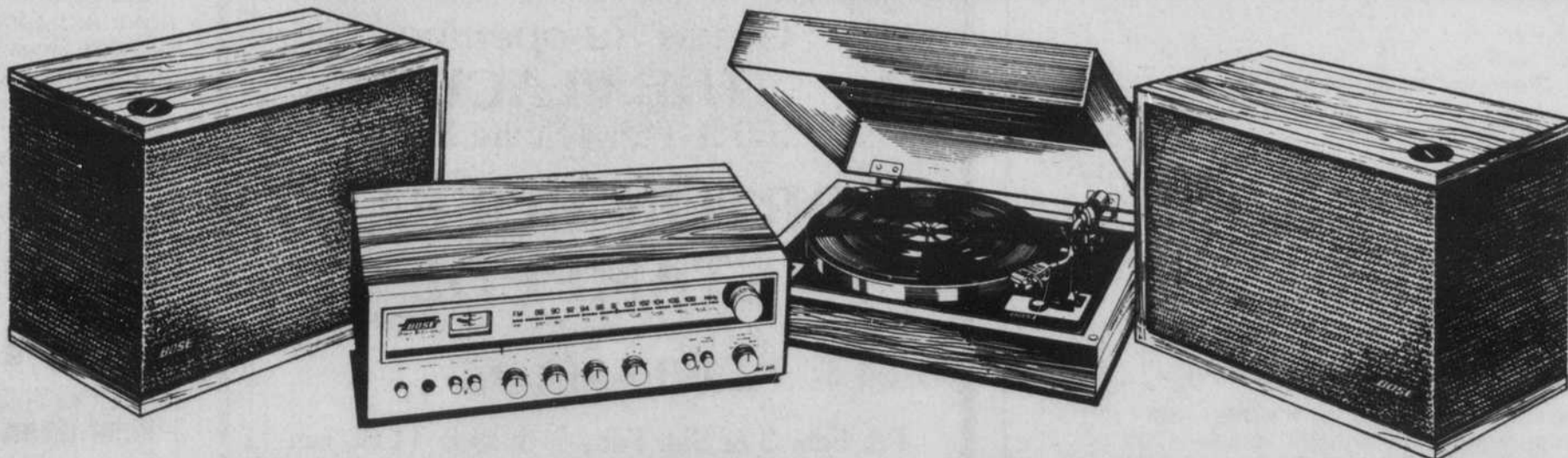
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