



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

# NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH HAZARD ASSESSMENT

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## **OEHHA Withdraws Public Health Goal for Chromium**

SACRAMENTO – The California Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) announced today that it is withdrawing its Public Health Goal (PHG) for chromium in drinking water. The PHG, adopted in February 1999, was 2.5 parts per billion (ppb).

OEHHA is withdrawing the PHG because it was calculated using a study that OEHHA no longer plans to use for assessing health risks from chromium. University of California (UC) peer reviews conducted prior to the adoption of the PHG had deemed the study's data as appropriate for deriving the PHG. However, a scientific panel convened by UC earlier this year at OEHHA's request issued a report in September that concluded the study's data was flawed and should not be used as the basis for health risk assessments. The panel was formed to advise OEHHA on the development of a PHG specifically for chromium 6, the most toxic form of chromium.

OEHHA and the Department of Health Services (DHS) committed in March to develop the nation's first PHG and drinking-water standard for chromium 6, also known as hexavalent chromium. The chromium 6 PHG, which OEHHA will develop by Spring 2003, will replace the withdrawn PHG for "total" chromium, which consists of both chromium 6 and a less-toxic form of the metal, chromium 3. DHS will use the new PHG to develop a chromium 6 drinking-water standard. In addition, legislation signed by Governor Gray Davis last month (Senate Bill 351 by Senator Deborah Ortiz) requires DHS to adopt a chromium 6 standard by January 2004.

A PHG is the level of a chemical contaminant in drinking water that does not pose a significant risk to public health. State law requires drinking water standards to be set as close to the PHG as is economically and technically feasible.

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