



10 Years of Fluoride "Leaks," "Spills" and Overfeeds in the U.S.

National Fluoridation News

November-December, 1981

*Compiled by Martha Bevis, President
Safe Water Foundation of Texas -- 11419 Shadow Way, Houston, TX 77024*

FLUORIDE
ACTION
NETWORK

<u>TOWN AND REFERENCE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CAUSE OF ACCIDENT</u>	<u>RESULTS</u>
Northeast Bradford Elem. School, Rome, Pa. Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene - Field Investigation Repo", (Annapolis) 35-36 (3-19- 80) State of Maryland; M. Duggan (8/20/79 and 12/30/81)	6/6/72	Blockage of BIF feeder by-pass occurred sending excess fluoride into water system as high as 67 mg./L. DER (Dept. of Env. Resources), Towanda, Pa. Records show fluoride at 48 ppm in water and 230 ppm in coffee.	150 students attending a school picnic vomited after drinking orange juice made with the water.
Manly County, N. C. Morbidity Mort. Weekly Report, Center for Disease Control, 23: 1 (6/1/74)	4/16/74	Fluoride feeder pump malfunctioned, causing the fluoride solution to be fed into the water system continuously while water pump not operating.	213 individuals experienced nausea after drinking orange juice mixed with water. 201 students and 7 adults vomited.
Lebanon, Pa. NFN, (July-Sept. 1975) Lebanon Daily News	8/20/75	Storage tank holding 6,000 gallons of hydrofluosilicic acid (fluoride) ruptured.	Substantial damage to water plant. Approximately 1,500 gallons went into drains below plant threatening structure. DER (Dept. of Env. Resources) reported fluoride leaked into holding ponds and Swatara Creek killing fish.
Seattle, Washington NFN (July-Sept. 1976) Seattle Times (5/23/76)	May/76	Plastic fitting broke in rubber-lined steel tank spilling fluoride on the ground in Cedar River watershed.	5,000 gallons of fluoride spilled. An earth mound was built around tank to divert spillage from river.
Syracuse, N. Y. NFN (April-June 1977)	3/29/77	1,200 gallons of fluoride was accidentally pumped into Skaneateles Creek from a	Within hours of the spill, hundreds of dead fish lined the banks of the creek. 1,900

Auburn Citizen		ruptured underground fluoride tank.	previously stocked trout assumed dead.
Marin County, Calif. NFN (Oct.-Dec. 1977) Son Rafael Ind. Jrnl.	10/26-11/1/77	Fluoride feeder valve malfunctioned. (Read newspaper article about this accident)	Five communities received fluoride above "accepted" level for several days without notice to the public. The Ind. Jrnl. reported the water district staff justified distribution of the overdosed water on the grounds it was a drought year.
Harbor Springs, Mich. Jrnl. Am. Water Wrks. 72, 238-243, (4/80) NFN (Apr-June 1980) Harbor Light, (12/2-8/81) Clinical Toxicology, 18 (5) 531-541 (1981)	11/22/77	A tree cut down by contractor fell on power lines controlling city water system electrical signal lines. The disruption automatically triggered into simultaneous operation three of the city's four well-water pumps, and the fluoride feeder continued to operate. (it was first thought the problem was an "iron buildup"; iron levels were high due to interaction of the fluoride with the water mains.)	Approximately 189 lbs. of fluoride was accidentally pumped into the city's water system. Tests at one discharge line showed 1,000 milligrams per liter of fluoride. Four people experienced nausea or vomiting and weakness. Had it not been an off-season for this resort town and the accident happening after lunch and before afternoon coffee breaks, more could have been poisoned.
Los Lunas, New Mexico (Elementary School) NFN (July-Sept. 1980) Pediatrics, 65, No. 5 897-900 (May 1990)	11/17/78	Faulty electric relay switch caused concentrated fluoride to be pumped into water system without being diluted with non-fluoridated water. (See study discussing this accident)	34 people had acute fluoride poisoning. Symptoms were abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, muscle twitching and excessive salivation.
Island Falls, Maine Report given by Island Falls Water District. Manager (9/21/81) "Field Investigation Report" (Annapolis) Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland pg. 28 (3/19/81)	May, 1979	Fluoride machine let extra fluoride into water system while motor head was being changed. "The exact water fluoride level was not ascertained although a water sample at a manufacturing plant was greater than 10 ppm."	5 people suffered gastrointestinal illness. Dept. of Human Services advised announcement on radio for public not to drink water.
Annapolis, Maryland "Field Investigations Report", Dept of Health and Mental Hygiene (3/19/80) Morb. Mort. Weekly Report, Center for	11/11/79	Operator failed to close valve of fluoride container; 1,000 gallons of fluoride went into drinking water supply of Anapolis. If the water plant supervisor had realized the toxicity of	Dialysis patients: 1 death, 1 cardiac arrest (resuscitated), nausea, hypotension (low blood pressure), chest pain or pressure, diarrhea, itching flushing, vomiting (blood

Disease Control, 29:No. 12 (3/28/80)
 Clinical Toxicology, 18 (5) 531-541 (1981)
 NFN (Nov.-Dec 1979)
 NFN (July-Oct. 1981)

fluoride and reported how much fluoride had gone into the water, fewer people would have been harmed. (Clinical Toxicology, Vol. 18, No.5, pp. 531-541, 1981). The problem was compounded by health officials failing to report the spill because they did not want to jeopardize the fluoridation program (Baltimore Sun 11/28/79).

tinged), weakness, dyspnea (breathing difficulty), diaphoresis (profuse sweating), shakiness, localized numbness, abdominal cramping, headache.

Others not on dialysis suffered nausea, headache, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, and dizziness. For ramifications of fluoride poisoning in existing illnesses, see Clinical Toxicology, 18, (5) 531-541 (1981) and NFN (July-Oct., 1981).

Pepsi Cola filed suit for \$1.6 million for damage to product; other suits pending.

[\(Read newspaper article about this accident\)](#)

Pendleton, Oregon
 East Oregonian (7/20/81)

6/2-8/81

Pipe leading from fluoride storage tank broke.

4,000 gallons of fluoride leaked into ground. Brett McKnight, DEQ environmental engineer stated "From the data gathered from the soil sampling and water samples, there exists a real need for continual monitoring in the areas." The Umatilla Indian Reservation water also comes from this source.

Potsdam, N.Y.
 Courier-Freeman (8/18/81)

8/10/81

The diffuser, a plastic pipe that controls flow of fluoride into the water system broke off, allowing the entire contents of a drum of fluoride, ten times a normal "dose", into the water supply. The diffuser was found outside the water treatment plant where it had been flushed by backwash.

Village residents were without potable water, and in a state of "water emergency" from 2:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m.

The village administrator said the biggest cost would be overtime pay for Public Works personnel. This would not include cost of investigation by State Health Dept. personnel.

Jonesboro, Maine
Jonesboro Elem. School
 Dept. of Human Services,
 State of Maine (10/22/81)
 Bangor Daily News (10/7/81)
 The Maine Paper (12/14/81)
 Portland Press Herald (10/8/81)

10/6/81

Equipment and personnel malfunction. Equipment had been shut down due to faulty valve controlling the quantity of fluoride going into the drinking water. A Technician from the Dept. of Human Services told the custodian and principal there was no need to test the fluoride content of the water, that he had

57 students, teachers and principal taken to hospital. 38 were administered regurgitants to make them vomit the fluoride, and milk to counteract the poison. Two were admitted to the hospital for several hours for fast heartbeat. Other symptoms were nausea and abdominal pain, and vomiting.

NFN, (July-Oct. 1981)

turned the unit off. Tests showed 46 times the normal ratio of fluoride in the water.

On December 1, 1981, Jonesboro citizens voted 43-2 not to reinstate fluoridation at the school, and to charge the Dept. of Human Services with the emergency room bill of \$1,137.24.

- *To read about fluoridation accidents that occurred from between 1979 and the present, visit www.fluoridealert.org/accidents.htm*