

# State urged to limit probable carcinogen found in tap water

November 14, 2016 By Emily C. Dooley [emily.dooley@newsday.com](mailto:emily.dooley@newsday.com)



Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn (D-Setauket), left, with Adrienne Esposito, executive director of Citizens Campaign For The Environment, at a news conference Monday, Nov. 14, 2016, to discuss the need for state water standards for a solvent and probable carcinogen found in Long Island's water supplies. (Credit: David L. Pokress)

Drinking water standards for a solvent and probable carcinogen found in Long Island's water supplies need to be set by the state, an

official with an environmental group said Monday.

The chemical, 1,4-Dioxane, also used in personal care products, was found in nearly every water district on Long Island as part of a nationwide survey mandated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Results of that survey were released in August.

"This is a problem that's growing . . .," said Adrienne Esposito, executive director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment, during a Hauppauge news conference Monday to put pressure on state officials.

"We need state action," Esposito said. "We need a drinking water standard."

Suffolk County Legis. Kara Hahn (D-Setauket), who chairs the environment, planning and agriculture committee, said she was also working to make a similar request on behalf of the legislature.

Used as a stabilizer for industrial chemicals and in personal care products like detergent, 1,4-Dioxane cannot be treated through normal processes like air strippers.

Monday, the Suffolk County Water Authority announced it had approval from the state Department of Health to build and use a treatment system to remove the chemical. It is the first of its kind approved in New York.

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“Our expectations are that this process could be the solution regulators have been looking for to address this emerging contaminant of concern,” said SCWA Chief Executive Officer Jeffrey W. Szabo said in a news release.

More than 80,000 chemicals are registered for use nationwide and EPA regulations set safe drinking water levels for 96 contaminants. Every five years, in an attempt to gauge what other compounds may be in drinking water, the EPA requires water suppliers serving at least 10,000 people to test for up to 30 unregulated contaminants, from viruses and hormones to metals and volatile organic chemicals.

While the EPA does not have a drinking water regulation for 1,4-Dioxane, New York State has a catchall limit for 50 parts per billion for unregulated contaminants. In a statement, the state Department of Health said it urged the EPA to set standards for “unregulated contaminants in order to equitably protect all Americans.”

As part of the EPA survey, Hicksville Water District officials learned one of their wells detected 33 parts per billion of 1,4-Dioxane, the highest amount in the nation.

The district took the well out of normal use, making it the first to go offline when demand was lower and the last to go live in cases of high use.

It also asked the EPA and state Department of Environmental Conservation for help finding the source, and is part of a pilot program to test a removal system.

“This is a problem that’s growing,” Esposito said. “This is a problem that’s real. And we have the chance to get in front of this before it gets worse.”

Local water suppliers would like a national standard set by EPA that gives them time to get treatment systems in place, not something installed politically, said Dennis Kelleher, president of H2M Water and public relations representative for the Long Island Water Conference, a coalition of more than 50 water suppliers and industry representatives.

“We should be asking the EPA to set the standard,” he said. “It’s not a political issue, it’s a scientific issue.”

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