

As a result of irrigation and rain, these residues are carried away in rivulets to creeks and streams, contaminating surface waters in rivers, lakes and reservoirs. Other materials seep down and eventually reach deep ground water supplies. Thus, both sources of drinking water, surface water and deep ground water, have become polluted. Many rural homes obtain their water from a private well. Others depend upon municipal utilities for their water supply. Both draw water from the same sources. Both contain the same pollutants.

Contaminants in these waters can be metals and nitrates from fertilizers, organophosphates or organochlorocompounds from pesticides. Although the quality of well water is in the hands of the individual, one would expect regulation to ensure safer drinking water from municipal supplies. After all, federal laws require that utility companies test their water for chemical impurities and microbiological contaminants. However, these regulations may provide little assurance of safety.

Last November, I attended a conference on "Water and Health", organized for and attended by most of the County Health Officers in the State of California. At this conference, we learned that in spite of the *Safe Drinking Water Act Compliance of 1988*, a survey taken between July 1988 and June 1989 revealed only 60 percent of the small utility companies were in compliance. This means that 40 percent were not! The problem stems from the fact that very few of the small water utility companies have the funds to meet the requirements.

Violations found were as follows: bacterial contaminants, 57%; organic pollutants, 45%; inorganic content, 35%; turbidity, 85%. Certified operators are required by law to make the measurements; 56% of the small water suppliers failed to meet this requirement. Here the problem results from a shortage of technical people available to help small rural water companies meet these regulations.

## Rural food supply

With the exception of a few households who raise most of their own food, it appears that there is little difference

in the food supplies of the rural and urban populations. Since all people are exposed to the same residues and the same preservatives, they share the same risks. Even the freshest fruits and vegetables bought from local farms or produce stands bear the risks of residual pesticides.



## Working in the country

The greatest concern for people working in the agricultural community is their repeated exposure to heavy concentrations of chemical pesticides, herbicides, fumigants and fertilizers that are such an integral part of modern agriculture. Add to these, the traditional risks of harvesting, dust and particulate matter, pollen and other allergens, and it becomes evident that working in the country may be hazardous to one's health.

## Survival strategies

For some time I have been cautioning the Neo-Life family that we must protect ourselves by means now available.

The air we breathe and the water we drink can only be cleaned by good, efficient filters. Furthermore, our bodies need adequate vitamins and trace minerals to activate the enzymes that

work to protect our tissues from the effects of the contaminants that we do breathe or consume. A good diet is essential, and we must take the time to ensure we are receiving all the necessary nutrients every day.

The success of any survival strategy depends upon knowledge and an under-

standing of the risks and challenges we face. Hopefully these articles have increased the knowledge of these risks and the understanding of action that can be taken to achieve some level of protection, for knowledge combined with meaningful action is the key to surviving in a toxic world. ■

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