

**OCOEE UTILITY DISTRICT**  
**STATEMENT ON FLUORIDATION**

**03/16/2015**

The fluoridation of public drinking water has become a popular topic among the public, utilities, legislators, and regulators. Often the debate is heated as both sides of the issue feel that they are protecting the health of their communities and families with their position on the matter. I anticipate that this issue will be debated for some time to come.

Fluoridation of tap water is a local issue – so says the EPA, TDEC’s Division of Water Resources, American Waterworks Association, and the National Rural Water Association through the Tennessee Association of Utility Districts. Our Tennessee State Legislature has also supported this approach.

The Ocoee Utility District does not fluoridate water produced at our two treatment facilities. Water produced by the Ocoee Utility District over our 50 year history has never been fluoridated. We have no plans to change this. Some of our customers do receive fluoridated water. Our Dalton Pike service area, including our customer base southwest of Springplace Road, gets its water from connections with the Eastside Utility District. They do fluoridate. We have backup connections to Cleveland Utilities for emergencies that will introduce fluoridated water to our system when used. If you look at our Consumer Confidence Reports values for fluoride are given, but this value is only for the areas served by Eastside Utility District. The area served by our own plants constitutes approximately 80% of our customer base and is fluoride free.

We do not take a philosophical position regarding the science/dangers/benefits of fluoridating tap water. Volumes have been written supporting the benefits or dangers of the practice. Research will continue to be produced and debated. There is some validity to both arguments that may be decided one day.

Why do we not fluoridate the water we produce? The main reason is that we take a pragmatic and common sense approach to this issue. When estimates range from 92% to 96% of the water a utility typically produces is used for needs other than drinking and other consumption, it isn’t a good investment of resources. I think everyone can agree that your car, clothes, dishes, toilets, yards, etc. don’t benefit from the fluoridation of your tap water. We believe that adding any chemicals to the water that do not improve the quality of the water isn’t in the best interest of our customers.

Those of you who feel that the fluoridation of tap water is forced medication should be happy with our position on this issue. Those who feel that fluoridation of tap

water is in the best interest of our youth's dental health may not be quite as satisfied with the District's position. However, nothing replaces the topical application of fluoride toothpaste and other practices suggested by the American Dental Association regarding the dental health of those young and old. Besides, if most children are drinking soft drinks, juices, milk, and bottled water ( which I haven't heard of any brands fluoridating ) it really diminishes any possible benefit from the practice of fluoridation.

We continue to feel that this is the right decision for our customers. It just isn't practical to fluoridate in light of the very limited benefit the practice could provide our customers.