300,000 Unable to Use Water after Chemical Spill in West Virginia

Hundreds of thousands of West Virginians were unable to use their water for days after it was contaminated by a chemical spill on January 9, 2014.

MCHM is not considered a hazardous chemical and MCHM is exempt from 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act because it is grandfathered in because it is older than 1976.

MCHM is not covered by other regulations.

About 7,500 gallons of 4-methyl-cyclohexane-methanol, known as MCHM, leaked out of a storage tank and into the Elk River. At the time of the spill, little information was known about MCHM, but officials ordered residents not to use the water because the chemical can cause vomiting, nausea, and skin, eye and throat irritation. The ban on water usage obviously meant that residents should not drink the water, but they were also told not to cook, bathe, wash clothes or brush their teeth with it.