

INCIDENT: Chemical is Back Pressured into City Water Supply
LOCATION: Corpus Christi, Texas
SOURCE: National Press
DATE OF INCIDENT: December 14, 2016

Based on the report of a possible backflow incident affecting the City's public water supply, a "Do Not Use the Water" advisory was issued to the City of Corpus Christi's customers on December 14, 2016 at 10:30 pm. The City water service was immediately shut-off to the facility where the reported backflow occurred. Before that date the City of Corpus Christi became aware of possible contamination as early as December 1st, with water quality complaints from its customers regarding abnormalities of their water.

Officials warned Corpus Christi residents of the water contamination which originated at a chemical plant mixing tank, identifying the chemical as an asphalt emulsifier known as INDULIN-AA-86, which can burn skin and cause respiratory problems. It was discovered that up to 24 gallons of the chemical in concentration was pumped back into the city water main, an amount normally diluted and used to produce up to 8000 gallons of product. After further investigation, no backflow preventer was found on the incoming water line to the chemical plant. This had opened the opportunity for an internal unprotected cross connection on a mixing tank, to backpressure the chemical into the city water main.

This incident marked the fourth water advisory in Corpus Christi in approximately a two-year period, leaving city officials saying that, after this *backflow* incident, the practice of boiling the water would not make it safe. Due to chemical involvement in the water main, lawsuits were numerous, possibly adding up to tens of millions of dollars.