

# THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

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## Group urges cleanup of perchlorate

**ENVIRONMENT:** A report says the chemical at current levels may be harmful to children.

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THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

rocket fuel chemical that contaminated the Colorado River and several other Inland drinking water sources should be cleaned up to protect the health of fetuses, infants and children, an environmental group says in a report to be released today.

The Los Angeles-based Environment California Research & Policy Center contends that the small amounts of perchlorate in drinking water consumed by some 16 million Californians might be linked to lower intelligence, learning disabilities and other problems in children.

"We think perchlorate could be tied to problems we are seeing in increased neurological and behavior problems in kids," said Sujatha Jahagirdar, clean water policy advocate for Environment California.

After reviewing scientific

studies and evaluating the extent of contamination and other factors, the group concluded that regulators should limit perchlorate in drinking water to no more than 1 part per billion — less than the concentrations in many Inland drinking water supplies.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and state of Massachusetts have made preliminary findings that 1 part billion is safe for everyone, even infants and fetuses.

Environment California contends that California's proposed health goal — an amount the state considers safe for everyone — of 8 parts per billion is too high.

The group is urging the state to lower that goal.

Perchlorate is used in rocket fuel, munitions and fireworks. Leaks and spills at factories and military bases have allowed the chemical to invade rivers and groundwater.

In sufficient doses, it is known to impair the thyroid gland's ability to absorb iodide, a building block for the hormones that guide neurological develop-

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ment in fetuses and infants.

Just how much perchlorate is safe is the subject of scientific debate.

Scientists paid by industries responsible for much of the pollution have said that as much as 200 parts to billion is safe for all people.

To settle the debate, the Bush administration in 2003 asked the Independent National Academy of Sciences to review the

science on perchlorate and make recommendations to the administration.

The academy, dubbed by some as the Supreme Court of Science, is scheduled to release its findings on Tuesday.

Gail Rymer, spokeswoman for Lockheed Martin Corp., said by telephone she wanted to wait until the academy makes its report before commenting on the environmental group's conclusions.

"It's important to wait until Tuesday to see what the NAS

report says about the health effects of perchlorate," Rymer said. "They took an independent look at the science and followed a credible process."

Perchlorate pollution that turned up in Redlands, Loma Linda and Riverside drinking water supplies is believed to have leaked from a former Lockheed rocket factory in Mentone.

Glen Avon environmentalist Penny Newman, executive director of the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice, said her organization is

working in a partnership with Environment California.

The Glen Avon group will use the report to press regulators and water districts to remove perchlorate from Inland drinking water supplies, she said.

Newman acknowledged that many of the health impacts of perchlorate are unknown.

But she added that no one should be taking risks with a chemical that might be harming people, especially small children. "Once the damage is done, you can't undo it," she said.