

# Press Release No. 23/2011

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## Coast is clear between ocean and water tap

### New UBA brochure on drinking water: *Rund um das Trinkwasser*

**In many countries it is customary to be served a carafe of tap water for free. Asking for the same at a restaurant here in Germany is often answered with a waiter's disdain, even though the tap water in Germany is an international winner. "Drinking water in Germany is generally of high quality. It is monitored thoroughly and regularly, is inexpensive and probably the only food that does not need to be lugged home," says Jochen Flasbarth, President of the Federal Environment Agency (UBA). So where does drinking water come from, where does it go, and why is lead-free a great thing? The answers to these and many other questions are now provided in a detailed UBA brochure on the topic entitled *Rund um das Trinkwasser*.**

Time and again UBA receives enquiries whether drinking water is safe. The new guide provides extensive candid information on everything there is to know about drinking water and a health-related assessment of substances such as calcium, magnesium or nitrate that are in it. In language that is easy to understand one learns how to successfully keep any pathogens out of tap water.

The guide also covers some technical and logistical aspects of drinking water distribution. One critical element that determines quality is the distribution system. Were the system in Germany lined up, it would measure over 500,000 kilometres and thus circle the Earth more than 12 times. Germany's water works have an excellent record- also on an international scale- in meeting the challenge of keeping the system watertight and protected against corrosion.

The proper adaptation of the materials used in pipes and mains in house and home to regional water quality is just as important as an intact distribution network. Pure copper pipes, for instance, are not suited for all drinking waters, and this calls for expert guidance. UBA President Flasbarth advises caution to all do-it-yourselfers, saying, "Any work done on the home drinking water system should be done by professionals who are approved by the regional water supplier as this is the only means to guaranteeing that the proper materials are used and that pathogens such as legionella do not enter either the hot or cold water system."

So why is lead-free such a great idea? Starting December 2013, the new limit value of 0.010 milligrammes per litre of drinking water must be complied with, and this can only be achieved without lead pipes, which are exceptionally rare nowadays anyway.

UBA's *Rund um das Trinkwasser* guide is the first in a series of brochures in which UBA aims to inform the public about drinking water in Germany.

The new UBA guide *Rund um das Trinkwasser* (in German) is available free of charge from the Federal Environment Agency, c/o GVP, PF 3303 61, 53183 Bonn or by sending an email to:

[uba@broschuerenversand.de](mailto:uba@broschuerenversand.de)

*Rund um das Trinkwasser* is available for download at <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien-e/4083.html>.

Dessau-Roßlau, 18.04.2011