

WATER BULLETIN

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Water Quality in Airplanes

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During the summer of 2004 the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) tested the water quality on board planes as part of enforcement activities. They tested galley water taps, water fountains and lavatory faucets on 158 aircraft at 7 airports. Twenty aircraft (12.6 %) tested positive for total coliform bacteria and two of these aircraft (1.3%) also tested positive for *E.coli*. Both total coliform and *E.coli* are indicator organisms which signify that other disease-causing organisms could be in the water supply and can have a negative health effect. Certain strains of *E.coli* (most notably O157) can be the cause of severe gastroenteritis illnesses.

In a follow-up study in November 2004 seventeen percent of 169 aircraft from 20 different airports were tested positive for total coliform bacteria. So it is shown this is a persistent problem. In November 2004 twelve national airlines have announced a commitment with the EPA to implement new aircraft water testing and disinfection protocols.

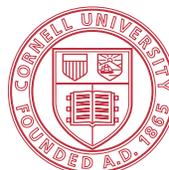
The reason most airlines give for the contamination of the water supply is the bad quality of water at oversea intake points. The subsequent disinfection is not adequate enough at the moment to prevent the contamination.

The EPA is negotiating with two more big airlines and several charter and small carriers to introduce better protocols. New regulations will probably be issued in the next 12-18 months. In the mean time, people with compromised immune systems or infants can ask for bottled water or bring their own

The airlines that have committed to protocol changes are: Alaska Airlines, Aloha Airlines, American Airlines, America West, ATA Airlines, Continental Airlines, Hawaiian Airlines, Jet Blue, Midwest Airlines, Northwest Airlines, United Airlines and US Airways.

For further information:

<http://www.epa.gov/airlinewater/index.html>



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