

The Role of Science and Policy: Drinking Water Safety After Fires

Wednesday, October 20th, 2021

12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. Pacific | Hosted via Zoom

RSVP via cutt.ly/water-whelton

For any questions please email

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Abstract

Drinking water infrastructure is critical for the health, safety, and economic prosperity of communities nationwide. Extensive and repeated wildfire damage to American and Canadian drinking water systems has exposed gaps in knowledge about infrastructure safety. Recent wildfires have revealed that buried drinking distribution system and plumbing contamination is poorly understood as well as they, themselves, becoming the generators of contamination. Firsthand experiences and results of recent studies regarding drinking water infrastructure contamination and decontamination will be shared. The role of plastics and community needs will also be discussed.

Bio

Professor Whelton is an environmental engineer and professor with 20 years of experience in the infrastructure, public health, and environmental areas. He is the Director of the Healthy Plumbing Consortium and Founder and Lead for the Center for Plumbing Safety. His teams are called upon to help communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. Whelton's leadership through research, community engagement, and education has positively changed how government agencies (EPA, CDC, NRC, NIOSH, NIST, FEMA), water utilities, nonprofit organizations, health departments, state legislatures, and building owners approach their responsibilities. Results from his work have been reported nationally and internationally. In recent years, some initiatives have focused on helping communities respond and recover from wildfire damage to utility water systems and building plumbing. His team provided support to government agencies, utilities and communities impacted by the Camp Fire, California's deadliest fire on record, and many others. He's supported responses to wildfires in Oregon and in British Columbia. Professor Whelton previously worked for the U.S. Army, private sector, National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST), and University of South Alabama. He earned a B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. Engineering degrees from Virginia Tech.

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