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# **The Environmental Impact & Other Potential Risks Associated With Bottled Drinking Water**

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# Outline

- ❑ How big is the problem?
- ❑ Why should we care?
- ❑ So... is there an alternative?
- ❑ Closing remarks & your questions/  
comments



# How big is the problem?

Numerous articles and studies from reliable sources have been published regarding the actual environmental impact of using bottled water.

I believe it's important to quantify some of the key areas without necessarily prioritizing them:

- In the U.S. alone, some **36 Billion** plastic bottles were sold in 2006 (drinking water only)  
→ *Extrapolating to the U.A.E., that's more than **500 Million** bottles a year.*
- The crude oil production that goes into making the plastic bottles... approx. **17 Million** barrels of oil in the U.S. alone → *U.A.E. equiv. **250 Thousand** barrels.*
- The energy used in water treatment (desalinate/purify/disinfect) as well as the production processes at the bottling plant. This has been estimated at roughly **0.25 Liter** of oil for each Liter of drinking water. → *In the U.A.E., that's another **390 Thousand** barrels.*
- The water used to wash and refill the bottles... one source estimates that more than **3 Liters** are used at various stages for each Liter that reaches the consumer.
- The fuel consumed by delivery trucks (or your own vehicle) to transport the water to/from your home or office. As much as an additional **0.10-0.15 Liter** of fuel per Liter of drinking water & more than 5-20 times or more that amount for imported water.

*Sources: Container Recycling Institute, International Bottled Water Association, Earth911.com, The Economist, others.*



# Why should we care?

The biggest issue is arguably the recycling of the plastic used in practically all sources of bottled water... just imagine the volume of waste generated by bottles that aren't recycled.

Here are some more thought-provoking stats... in the U.S., it is estimated that:

- 8 out of 10 plastic bottles end up in a landfill (not recycled or incinerated).
- It can take about 450 years or more for a plastic bottle to degrade in a landfill.
- Only about 20-30% of plastic bottles are recycled, higher in some states than others.
- It is estimated that the production of plastics accounts for 4% of total energy consumption.
- Less than 1 percent of all plastics is actually recycled.
- Recycling a single plastic bottle can conserve enough energy to light a 60-watt light bulb for up to six hours.
- Producing new plastic products from recycled materials uses approx. 67% less energy than required to make products from raw (virgin) materials.

*Sources: Container Recycling Institute, International Bottled Water Association, Earth911.com, The Economist, others.*



# Why should we care?

(cont'd.)

**CRI**  
CONTAINER  
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Number of beverage cans and bottles that have  
been landfilled, littered and incinerated  
in the U.S. so far this year: **115,383,315,876**

As of 23-Nov-2010 @ 08:05 (local U.A.E. time)

... that's more than **316 Million** containers a day !!!



## *But isn't that in America...* **Why should we care?**

A very large proportion of the bottled drinking water used in homes & offices in the U.A.E. is supplied in re-usable hard plastic bottles made from Polycarbonate (PCB), also known as Lexan.<sup>®</sup>

There are health and hygiene factors or risks associated in particular with the use of the ubiquitous free-standing water coolers with the 5-gallon bottles:

- The leaching of *Bisphenol A* (BPA) has been linked to certain ailments or potential health risks – refer to the Harvard School of Public Health press release of May 2009. [[Link](#)]
- Plus, there are other health / hygiene risks associated with regular handling and replacing the bottles, possible contamination, etc.



# *No, but really...* **Why should we care?**

- A picture tells a thousand words:



- In terms of time, space, and convenience, it is also worth considering the regular deliveries of bottles and the associated hassles of transporting / storing them at your home or place of work – office, bank, school, clinic, etc.
- Don't forget that each time you replace a bottle, lifting the 20-kg. full bottle poses or increases the risk of developing or aggravating back pain.



# So... is there an alternative?

I believe there's more than one...

- Use ***bottle-free*** dispensers... there are some on the market (air-to-water, home filtration units, etc.)
- Produce / treat your own drinking water \*
- When you do buy bottled water:
  - ✓ Always choose local water from the closest source... saves a lot of fuel (& usually saves you money)
  - ✓ Choose PET over PCB when available
  - ✓ And of course... *Re-use & Recycle* the empty bottles
- Spread the word !!!

\* Please don't drink directly from the tap or well unless the water has been tested / checked to be free of contaminants & harmful substances with lab analysis confirming that it is fit for drinking.



# **Closing remarks & your questions / comments**



# About DEWS

- **Dynamic Energy & Water Solutions (DEWS)** is a licensed *Enpark Free Zone* company based in Dubai.
- We are a future-looking company that has the will and desire to advance the use of solar energy and water purification / recycling, not only because they are essential ingredients of a *Greener*, more sustainable environment, but also out of conviction that they can provide all participants with better living conditions and meaningful work in the process.
- Our unique value proposition is providing products, turn-key solutions & other services to *underserved niches with special needs* – new solar & renewable energy technology / applications, solar to water, solar cooling, water purification, re-use & recycling, air-to-water production, equipment sale & rental / leasing, project advisory services & execution support.
- DEWS caters to the needs of a number of target market segments in the Middle East & North Africa, offering innovative products & services to a variety of sectors, including commercial, residential, industrial, utilities, marine, oil & gas.
- DEWS markets & sells technology-based products of high quality & unique function or features supplied by reputable vendors / manufacturers.

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### *2009 Releases*

## BPA, Chemical Used to Make Plastics, Found to Leach from Polycarbonate Drinking Bottles Into Humans

*Exposure to BPA May Have Harmful Health Effects*

For immediate release: Thursday, May 21, 2009

Boston, MA -- A new study from Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) researchers found that participants who drank for a week from polycarbonate bottles, the popular, hard-plastic drinking bottles and baby bottles, showed a two-thirds increase in their urine of the chemical bisphenol A (BPA). Exposure to BPA, used in the manufacture of polycarbonate and other plastics, has been shown to interfere with reproductive development in animals and has been linked with cardiovascular disease and diabetes in humans. The study is the first to show that drinking from polycarbonate bottles increased the level of urinary BPA, and thus suggests that drinking containers made with BPA release the chemical into the liquid that people drink in sufficient amounts to increase the level of BPA excreted in human urine.

The study appears on the website of the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives* and is freely available at <http://www.ehponline.org/members/2009/0900604/0900604.pdf>.

In addition to polycarbonate bottles, which are refillable and a popular container among students, campers and others and are also used as baby bottles, BPA is also found in dentistry composites and sealants and in the lining of aluminum food and beverage cans. (In bottles, polycarbonate can be identified by the recycling number 7.) Numerous studies have shown that it acts as an endocrine-

