

Banned: Salt Water Softeners

Twenty Five California Communities Ban or Restrict Use

1-20-95 -- [Frank Jenkins] today announced ...

[Indianapolis AP - The environmental movement appears to be making headway in it's campaign to prohibit water softeners that use salt. More than 25 communities in California have already banned or restricted the use of such water softeners on the grounds that they are hazardous to the environment. The California communities include cities in such counties as Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, Kern, Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Marco, and Tulare. Typical of the California laws is an ordinance passed by the board of Supervisors of the County of San Diego, which says "The discharge of water softener brine wastes into District sewers shall be prohibited in accordance with the provisions of this section. The section is intended to apply to all districts where the districts final treated wastewater effluent is discharged to inland disposal or water reclamation used."

Why are salt-based water softeners banned in cities across the United States?

Answer: Salt-based water softeners use salt as a regenerative agent. When salt-based water softeners regenerate, the brine, which is full of chlorides, is transferred to the wastewater treatment plant. From the wastewater treatment plant, chloride is discharged into streams and rivers. Chloride is detrimental to the ecosystems of streams and rivers and hazardous to the environment. The EPA and various States have established certain regulatory levels for chloride discharge from municipal and local wastewater treatment plants which many treatment plants are having difficulty meeting. The treatment plants can spend significant amounts to upgrade their equipment to handle the ever-rising levels of chlorides, or ban the future use of regenerating salt-based water softeners, which are significant sources of contaminating chlorides.