

Water report prompts complaint



Instead of preventing a health problem....it got worse.**

DEPUTY ALEJANDRO SÁNCHEZ

On authorities' delay in a water report

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Mexico City deputies on Monday called for the resignation of the director of the Federal Commission for Protection against Health Risks (Cofepris), complaining that he delayed a report showing that three boroughs were receiving tap water with traces of fecal matter.

Deputy Alejandro Sánchez Camacho, spokesperson of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) in the Federal District's Legislative Assembly (ALDF), said Miguel Angel Toscano Velasco should resign before legal proceedings are launched against him.

In a complaint filed before the Federal Attorney General's Office (PGR), Sánchez said Toscano should appear

before the PGR and offer his version of the story. Sánchez alleged that Toscano, irresponsibly and under political manipulation, delayed the test results for three months, when they should've been dispersed in three days.

The Cofepris and National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) studies found traces of fecal matter, along with other contaminants, in potable water supplied to the southern boroughs of Xochimilco, Milpa Alta and Tláhuac. Released on Thursday, the report is based on 107 samples tested in June and July; nine were found to have E. Coli, a bacteria that indicates the presence of fecal contamination.

Testing also showed that chlorine levels were below recommended limits. Between 0.2 and 1.4 mg should be added to every liter of water, but one test showed that E. Coli had survived 0.18 mg/L. Seven other tests, however, found that contaminants survived

between 0.21 and 0.69 mg/L, and one test showed contaminants survived at 2.39 mg/L.

The Cofepris called the results a serious health threat and cautioned residents, despite the use of chlorine.

Sánchez said that if Cofepris' findings are true, the commission shirked its administrative responsibilities and maybe even bordered on criminal misconduct for not acting on the knowledge of infected drinking water.

"Instead of preventing a health problem, Cofepris did what was necessary" to hide the information, and "for three months the problem got worse as Cofepris didn't act or inform the responsible authorities," Sánchez said.

While the PGR will have a resolution to the lawmakers' request within 30 days, Sánchez said, federal and capital authorities and UNAM researchers are set to test water in the affected zones again on Friday. Sánchez promised to keep up-to-date with the situation and said deputies might even accompany inspectors.

