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September 6, 2017

Morgan Whitaker
Managing Editor
770 Broadway
New York, New York 10003

press@teamaol.com

Dear Ms. Whitaker,

I am writing in regard to AOL's article/slideshow "[5 reasons you should never drink out of a plastic water bottle](#)" published August 23, 2017, on AOL.com. This article/slideshow contains many false or misleading statements about bottled water, and, in most cases, the images used do not correspond with the headline and text. I request that you review the information below and update your slideshow to reflect the facts about bottled water.

Slide #1. Photo shows PET (polyethylene terephthalate) plastic bottled water bottles, headline: *They can release harmful chemicals into your water*, and text: *Plastics are made to withstand a variety of temperatures -- but at a cost. The hotter the bottle gets, the more potential there is to release chemicals known to cause diseases like cancer, especially if you use them over and over again.*

Fact: As with all food packaging materials, bottled water containers must be made from food contact substances approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This means the plastic and glass containers used for bottled water products have undergone FDA scrutiny prior to being available for use in the marketplace. FDA has determined that containers used by the bottled water industry are safe for use with food and beverage products—including bottled water—and they do not pose a health risk to consumers. In addition, single-serve bottled water products are packaged in PET plastic containers, which do not contain ingredients capable of producing dangerous substances under conditions of normal use, including being subjected to hot temperatures. For more than 30 years, PET plastic has been approved as safe for food and beverage contact by the FDA and similar regulatory agencies throughout the world. PET plastic is used in the containers for many other beverages, including soft drinks, juices, beer, wine, and spirits. Conclusion: There is no link between PET plastic bottles and cancer or other illnesses.

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Slide #2. Photo shows a pregnant woman holding a PET plastic bottled water bottle, headline: *Chemicals in the plastic may make having a baby more difficult*, and text: *Those same chemicals in the plastic, like BPA, could make having a baby more difficult by affecting fertility.*

Researchers found that men and women undergoing in-vitro fertilization who had high levels of BPA in their blood, urine, and work environment were less likely to have a successful pregnancy. This is according to a 2013 review of 91 studies published in Reproductive Toxicology.

Fact: BPA (bisphenol A) is not a chemical component of PET plastic, which is commonly used for small, portable 16.9 ounce (half-liter), and 20 and 24 ounce beverage products, including bottled water. Moreover, FDA—along with regulatory agencies in several countries—has ruled favorably on the safety of BPA. The consensus among these international regulatory agencies is that the current levels of exposure to BPA through food packaging do not pose a health risk. For more on BPA, visit the American Chemistry Council’s website factsaboutbpa.org.

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Slide #3. Photo shows a hand reaching for a PET plastic bottled water bottle from a shelf, headline: *It could raise your risk of heart disease and other circulatory issues*, and text: *Humans exposed to the highest levels of BPA have an increased risk of heart disease, according to a 2012 study published in Circulation. Researchers think this could be due to BPA's link to high blood pressure.*

Fact: Again, BPA is not a chemical component of PET plastic. Moreover, regulatory agencies in several countries and the FDA have ruled favorably on the safety of BPA. The consensus among these international regulatory agencies is that the current levels of exposure to BPA through food packaging do not pose a health risk.

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Slide #4. Photo shows numerous PET plastic bottled water bottles on a shelf, headline: *Refilling plastic bottles may expose you to harmful bacteria*, and text: *Both reusable and disposal plastic bottles break down from regular use over time, meaning that even teeny cracks can welcome in bacteria, according to an article published in journal Practical Gastroenterology. And while most bacteria is usually harmless, bottles can harbor norovirus-, cold-, and flu-causing bacteria. And while usually we'd advise you to wash with hot water and soap, that could cause the plastic to break down even more!*

Fact: Once a single-serve PET plastic bottled water container is opened and the product consumed, it should not be reused. Instead, the empty bottle should be recycled, as one would do with other PET food and beverage containers. PET containers are 100 percent recyclable and, after use, should be placed in a recycling bin for collection or returned for deposit, where/if applicable. Bottled water products are subject to comprehensive FDA regulations that help ensure their safety and quality. All bottled water products - whether from groundwater or public water sources - are produced utilizing a multi-barrier approach. From source to finished product, a multi-barrier approach helps prevent possible harmful contamination to the finished product as well as storage, production, and transportation equipment. Many of the steps in a multi-barrier system are effective in

safeguarding bottled water from microbiological and other contamination. Measures in a multi-barrier approach may include one or more of the following: source protection, source monitoring, reverse osmosis, distillation, micro-filtration, carbon filtration, ozonation, and ultraviolet (UV) light.

Further, bottled water is one of the few food products that FDA also subjects to extra two sets of requirements in addition to the general food Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) -- one prescribing bottled water Good Manufacturing Practices, and the other imposing specific bottled water standards of identity and quality. FDA's GMPs for bottled water apply to every aspect of production, from source protection, all the way through processing, to finished water sampling for purity prior to final bottling. FDA has established standards for more than 90 substances pursuant to the Standard of Quality (SOQ) for bottled water. Most FDA bottled water quality standards are the same as EPA's maximum contaminant levels (MCL) for public water systems. The few differences are usually the result of the substance not being found in bottled water or the substance is regulated under FDA food additives program.

Request: Please use a non-PET plastic bottled water image and correct the text.

Slide #5. Photo shows a hand placing a PET plastic bottled water bottle in a blue bin, headline: *They're awful for the environment (Duh!),* and text: *Many of the bottles are still ending up in the garbage even after they are recycled once. The solution? At home filters. Or bottles made of steel, aluminum, or polycarbonate because as they say it's better to be safe than sorry.*

Fact: It is false to say that bottled water is “awful for the environment.” In fact, bottled water has the smallest environmental footprint of all packaged beverages. All bottled water containers are 100 percent recyclable, and, as an industry, we support strong community recycling initiatives and recognize that a continued focus on increased recycling is important for everyone. In addition, bottled water containers are the most common item in curbside recycling programs, recycled at a rate of 50.9 percent. And the industry is always looking for ways to strengthen existing recycling programs and help to expand recycling efforts ever further. However, even when they are not properly recycled, bottled water containers make up only 3.3 percent of all drink packaging in U.S. landfills. Glass containers make up 66.7 percent; soda containers make up 13.3 percent; and aluminum cans make up 7.9 percent. See this [drink packaging in U.S. landfills infographic](#). Bottled water also has the lowest water- and energy-use ratios of all packaged beverages. On average, it takes only 1.32 liters of water to produce 1 liter of finished bottled water (including the liter of water consumed), which is the lowest water-use ratio of any packaged beverage product. And on average, only 0.24 mega joules of energy are used to produce 1 liter of bottle of water. Continual light-weighting of PET plastic packaging has seen the average weight drop to 9.25 grams per 16.9 ounce single-serve container. That is almost one-third less than the amount of PET it takes to make soda and other drink containers, which need to be thicker due to carbonation and manufacturing processes and weigh, on average, 23.9 grams. According to the Beverage Marketing Corporation, between 2000 and 2014, the average weight of a 16.9-ounce (half-liter) PET plastic bottled water container declined 51 percent. This resulted in a savings of 6.2 billion pounds of PET resin since 2000.

Request: Please show an image of a PET plastic bottled water bottle being placed in a recycling bin and correct the text to include the facts provided above.

Thank you for reading and giving our concerns your attention. We respectfully request that you update your article/slideshow to correct the aforementioned errors.

Sincerely,

Jill Culora
Vice President of Communications
International Bottled Water Association