

RENEW Distinguished Lecture Series in Energy, Environment & Water Sustainability

Title of Lecture: *The Washington D.C. Lead Crisis
(2001-2004): Prelude to Flint 2015*



When: 11:00am – 12:40pm, October 20th, 2016 (presentation followed by a discussion)

Where: Student Union Theatre, North Campus, University at Buffalo

Featuring: “Hero of Flint” Marc Edwards

Congressional Biosketch:



Marc Edwards received his bachelor's degree in Bio-Physics from SUNY Buffalo in 1986. He received his M.S. and Ph.D. in Environmental Engineering from the University of Washington, in 1988 and 1991, respectively. In 2004, Time Magazine dubbed Dr. Edwards "The Plumbing Professor" and listed him amongst the 4 most important "Innovators" in water from around the world. The White House awarded him a Presidential Faculty Fellowship in 1996. In 1994, 1995, 2005, 2011 and 2016 Edwards received Outstanding Paper Awards in the Journal of American Waterworks Association and he received the H.P. Eddy Medal in 1990. His M.S. Thesis and PhD Dissertation won national awards from the American Water Works Association (AWWA), the Association of Environmental Engineering

and Science Professors (AEESP) and the Water Environment Federation. He was later awarded the Walter Huber Research Prize from the American Society of Civil Engineers (2003), State of Virginia Outstanding Faculty Award (2006), a MacArthur Fellowship (2008-2012), and the Praxis Award in Professional Ethics from Villanova University (2010). His paper on lead poisoning of children in Washington D.C., due to elevated lead in drinking water, was judged the outstanding science paper in Environmental Science and Technology in 2010. In 2013 Edwards' was the 9th recipient (in a quarter century) of the IEEE Barus Award for "courageously defending the public interest at great personal risk," and in 2016 he was named amongst the most influential people in the world by Fortune and Time magazine.

Edwards is currently the Charles Lunsford Professor of Civil Engineering at Virginia Tech, where he teaches courses in environmental engineering, applied aquatic chemistry and engineering ethics. Since 1995, undergraduate and graduate students advised by Edwards have won 25 nationally recognized awards for their research work. He has published more than 180 peer reviewed journal articles, made more than 300 national and international conference presentations, and has delivered dozens of keynote and endowed lectures. Edwards is a Past-President of the Association of Environmental and Engineering Science Professors, and in 2004 and 2010 he testified to the United States Congress on the issue of lead in Washington DC drinking water and scientific misconduct at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), respectively. His research group is currently emphasizing research on premise plumbing-- a problem costing consumers in the U.S. billions of dollars each year and which also can endanger the safety of potable water. The National Science Foundation, individual water utilities and homeowners' groups, the AWWA Research Foundation, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), and the Copper Development Association and have supported that research. His students' work has been featured in Time Magazine, Materials Performance, National Public Radio, Prism, Salon, Good Housekeeping, Environmental Science and Technology, Public Works, Earth and Sky, and in newspaper articles around the country, and has spurred several new Federal laws to protect the public from lead in water hazards.

Abstract: The 2001-2004 Washington D.C. lead in drinking water crisis (and its aftermath to the present day) is a unique case study in the history of engineering and scientific misconduct. The multi-year exposure of an unsuspecting population to very high levels of the best-known neurotoxin, was perpetrated by multiple government agencies whose sole mission was to protect the public health. These same agencies later published falsified research reports, covering up evidence of harm and justifying ill-conceived interventions wasting hundreds of millions of dollars and which created even more harm. Aspiring to uphold the duty of scientists and engineers to hold paramount the public good and welfare, Marc Edwards worked alongside collaborators in the public, press and in Congress for over a decade. Their efforts exposed some of the wrongdoing by the agencies and their “hired gun” consultants, who brazenly twisted science to obfuscate the truth of what occurred. These experiences raise concerns about the veracity of “research” conducted and funded by government agencies, especially in crisis situations when public harm has occurred, as well as the need for checks and balances on agency power.

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About the RENEW Distinguished Lectures: The RENEW Distinguished Lecture Series seeks to promote dialogue and interaction with UB’s faculty & staff, students and the local community with renowned leaders in science, technology and policy in academia, industry and government.

About UB RENEW Institute: RENEW promotes interdisciplinary research activities to position UB as a global leader in select areas of energy, environment and water (www.buffalo.edu/renew). Through collaborative education and research, more than 100 faculty members from seven schools are focusing on the following areas: Next-Generation Materials for Energy, Environment & Water; Sustainable Urban Environments; Freshwater Coastal Ecosystems, Stormwater and Blue Economy; Environmental Exposures, Genomes and Health; and Climate Change & Socio-Economic Impacts.