

PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS

Public Water Systems Information and Responsibilities

Water is the essential to our life! It can become contaminated by bacteria, pesticides, chemicals, lead, and sewage, just to name a few. If you are a "provider" of water to the public, you will be responsible to follow federal, state, and local regulations, and their procedures, to insure the water you supply to the public is safe.

The Safe Drinking Water Act was passed by Congress in 1974, and has been amended several times since then. The purpose of the Act is to make sure that the drinking water supplied to the public is safe and wholesome. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the federal agency which has the responsibility of writing the regulations to carry out the provisions of the the Act.

The Clinton County Health Department is responsible for enforcing the Safe Drinking Water Act and the New York State Sanitary Code regulations regarding public water systems.

Public Water Systems (PWS)

Public Water Systems (PWS) come in all shapes and sizes, and no two are exactly the same. They may be publicly or privately owned and maintained. While their design may vary, they all share the same goal; providing safe, reliable drinking water to the communities they serve. To do this, most water systems must treat their water. The types of treatment provided by a specific PWS vary depending on the size of the system, whether they use ground water or surface water, and the quality of the source water.

A public water system is defined as a system providing water to the public for human consumption that has at least 5 service connections or serves at least 25 people per day for at least 60 days of the year.

What are the Minimum Responsibilities of a PWS?

1. Sample regularly for total coliforms from the distribution system. Number and frequency of samples depends upon the number of people served by the system.
2. Record daily maintenance and operation activities (chlorine residual or ultraviolet light reading) and send them to the Clinton County Health Department's Environmental Unit for review either monthly or quarterly.

3. Sample for various chemical contaminants such as volatile organic compound, pesticides, lead and copper, inorganic chemical compounds, and synthetic organic compounds. Whether or not these chemicals are sampled for and frequency of sampling depends on how many people the system serves.

4. Prepare an emergency plan and vulnerability response plan.

5. Prepare and annual water quality report and distribute it to all water customers.

6. Keep up with the day-to-day needs of running the water system - keeping equipment running and water flowing and safe to drink.

NOTE: Changes to a public water system must be reported.

What Happens if There's a Problem with a PWS?

Public notification must be made. This is the act of informing the customer and/or the water consumer and the general public of potential problems with a public water system.

The Clinton County Health Department may issue a "Boil Water" order to the PWS, and inform the public of the order. They may also provide other directions to the PWS to resolve the problem. The "Boil Water" order can be issued for the following reasons:

- > if water pressure goes below 20 pounds per square inch
- > a confirmed E. Coli positive water sample
- > failure of essential equipment in the water treatment facility
- > a sanitation survey reveals pollution sources that cannot normally be removed by the treatment provided

Some communicable diseases can be spread by contaminated water.

How are PWS's Monitored?

The Clinton County Health Department monitors PWS's by:

1. Surveillance Sampling: testing PWS samples
2. Sanitary Surveys: check operation, and disinfection equipment is all working properly
3. Documentation: ensures the PWS has good record keeping
4. Safety Levels: checks lead and copper levels are safe
5. Emergencies: responds to PWS water emergencies
6. Plan Approval: review and approval of all construction and modifications

Contact Us

To receive more information or assistance with Public Water Systems and their requirements, call or visit us at:

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