

Operator Training

Working Together to Safeguard our Health

What do you need to know to operate a small drinking water system?

Did you know that as of December 1, 2008, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) has oversight of small drinking water systems (SDWS) in Ontario? The MOHLTC has prepared an information kit to help you become familiar with the changes to Ontario's drinking water legislation. Reading the poster *How to Ensure your Water is Safe* is a good beginning

Under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, Ontario Regulation 318/08 (*Transitional – Small Drinking Water Systems*) and Ontario Regulation 319/08 (*Small Drinking Water Systems*) require you, as an owner or operator of a SDWS, to provide users with safe drinking water at all times and to know your responsibilities for the type of system that you operate. This starts with designating an operator who is responsible for the safe operation of the SDWS.

A public health inspector (PHI) will also conduct a site-specific risk assessment and issue a “directive” for each SDWS, in accordance with section 7 of Ontario Regulation 319/08, that outlines the operational requirements that must be carried out by the owner/operator. This directive may include specific operator training requirements appropriate for operating your SDWS.

To find out more about the regulatory requirements for your SDWS, including choosing the type of training that is appropriate for operating your

SDWS, contact the local public health unit to consult with a PHI to obtain fact sheets or other SDWS information.

What are the first steps to providing safe drinking water?

As the owner of a SDWS, it is your responsibility to ensure that all operators of the system know how to adequately operate the system to provide water to users that is safe to drink at all times. To better understand this important responsibility a number of learning options are available including:

- Self-directed learning;
- Educational material available from the local health unit;
- Other training, including courses approved by the Ministry of the Environment (MOE).

1. Self-directed learning

There are various types of educational material available to you that provide basic information in the form of booklets, fact sheets or brochures on how to operate your SDWS. This is just a small sample of what is available:

- Product literature and operational guide that is provided by the equipment manufacturer;

- Educational material (e.g., best practices documents) provided by various professional associations;
- Educational material (e.g., fact sheets on the proper collection of samples) provided by your local health unit;
- Guidance documents and other instructional material from various government agencies.

2. Educational material available from your local health unit

- Your local public health unit is an excellent resource for finding out how best to become informed about operating a safe drinking water system;
- The PHI will provide you with onsite training on certain aspects of your small drinking water system;
- Other education and training options may be offered by local water quality associations or professional associations.

3. Other training

This includes any training program that has been required by a directive issued by the PHI as being appropriate to provide you with the required knowledge to operate your SDWS. These may include any of the following:

- Any course that is offered or recommended by a manufacturer of treatment devices or recommended by your local health unit.
- Any of the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) approved correspondence courses that are offered by third party providers (e.g., local community colleges or other professional associations) or the Walkerton Clean Water Centre.

Previously acquired MOE-approved courses

To find out additional information about the MOE-approved correspondence courses that you may have previously taken to become an operator and their appropriateness for the new SDWS program, please contact the Ontario Environmental Training Consortium (OETC). You can reach the OETC office by:

- Telephone at (905) 796-2851;
- Visiting its website at www.oetc.on.ca

How will I know what type of training is best for me?

In determining what level of training is appropriate for you, a PHI will conduct a site-specific risk assessment of your SDWS. The resulting directive that the PHI issues for your system may include specific operator training requirements based on the type of SDWS that you operate.

Where can I find additional information?

Please remember...

This fact sheet is only a summary of your responsibilities as the owner or operator of a SDWS and is not a substitute for legal advice. For a more complete understanding of your legal responsibilities as an owner or operator, refer to Ontario Regulation 318/08 and Ontario Regulation 319/08 or any directives issued on your system.

In addition, you should become familiar with the procedure documents produced to help you efficiently operate a SDWS:

- *Procedure for Disinfection of Drinking Water in Ontario*; and



- *Procedure for Corrective Action for Small Drinking Water Systems that are Not Currently Using Chlorine.*

For general information about well water safety, ask your health unit staff for a copy of:

- *Keeping Your Well Water Safe to Drink: An information kit to help you care for your well.*

You may also find additional information on the following Ontario ministry websites:

Acts and Regulations:
www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/index.html

- Ontario Regulation 318/08: www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_080318_e.htm
- Ontario Regulation 319/08: www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_080319_e.htm

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC):
www.health.gov.on.ca

- SDWS Program: www.ontario.ca/Health-Drinkingwater
- Current list of local public health units: www.health.gov.on.ca/healthunits

Ministry of the Environment (MOE):
www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/index.php

- Current list of licensed laboratories: www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/water/sdwa/licensedlabs.php

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA): www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/

How can you stay up-to-date on drinking water issues?

You can request that you be added to the mailing list to stay current on small drinking water systems by sending an email to: environmental.health@ontario.ca

