

# HOW TO ENSURE YOUR WATER IS SAFE.

## TO BEGIN...

Do you know where to **BEGIN** or what your responsibilities are for operating your SDWS?

**Before you begin**, get to know what your duties are under the two SDWS Regulations: O. Reg. 318/08 (Transitional – Small Drinking Water Systems) and O. Reg. 319/08 (Small Drinking Water Systems).

- Obtain a copy of the two SDWS Regulations from the eLaws website;
- Obtain a copy of the fact sheet that explains your responsibilities under the SDWS Regulations. You should ask the PHI for copies of the SDWS Regulations and Directives fact sheets.

**Apply a multi-barrier approach.**

Obtain copies of the fact sheets that have been developed for each step below:

- **Protect**
- **Treat**
- **Maintain**
- **Monitor**
- **Notify**

**Fact sheets:**

*Regulations: Get to know the Law and Directives: Get to know the Law.*

## PROTECT

Do you know what, why and how to **PROTECT** the source of the water for your SDWS?

**Protect** the source where you obtain the water. The quality of your source water will determine what form of treatment is required to **protect** the users.

**There are two types of sources, ground water and surface water:**

### 1. Groundwater

#### a) Secure groundwater

To protect your well

- Construct and maintain your well properly;
- Ensure potential pollution sources are kept at a distance.

#### b) Non-secure groundwater

This may include shallow dug or bored wells

- Maintain or improve the structure of the well to minimize contamination;
- Ensure potential pollution sources are kept at a distance.

### 2. Surface water

- Be aware of potential sources of pollution;
- Attempt to remove potential pollution sources.

**Fact sheet:**

*Source Water: Working Together to Safeguard our Health*

## TREAT

Do you know when, why and how you should **TREAT** the water in your SDWS?

**Treat** your water based on the quality of the source and the complexity of the distribution system. You may need to **treat** the drinking water to provide:

- Proper disinfection or removal of harmful micro-organisms;
- Secondary disinfection to keep water safe throughout any distribution system;
- Removal of chemical and physical agents.

### Secure Groundwater

This water is normally considered suitable to be used without treatment. However, the use of treatment will provide additional protection to the users of your system.

### Surface Water and Non-secure Groundwater

Filtration and primary disinfection are required to support removal of potential micro-organisms.

### Distribution System

Secondary disinfection is required to support continued protection of water throughout the distribution system.

**Fact sheet:**

*Treatment Options: Working Together to Safeguard our Health*

## MAINTAIN

Do you know what, why and how to **MAINTAIN** the system equipment and the water quality of your SDWS?

**Maintain** your SDWS to ensure that all parts are constructed and operating properly to protect the quality of the drinking water.

As an operator, you must:

- **Maintain** frequent surveillance of the system's construction and operation (at least once weekly);
- Operate your system capably;
- Obtain adequate training in keeping with the complexity of the system;
- Ensure continuous and safe operation of the system (e.g., routine maintenance of UV bulbs);
- Respond appropriately to adverse situations.

**Maintain** your level of competency by ensuring your skills are appropriate for the system you operate. This is as easy as:

- Consulting with your local PHI;
- Reading the manufacturer's manuals for your system;
- Obtaining adequate training from the manufacturer, a local college or through a third party, as approved by your local PHI.

**Fact sheet:**

*Operator Training: Working Together to Safeguard our Health*

## MONITOR

Do you know what, where, why and how to **MONITOR** the quality of the water in your SDWS?

**Monitor** the drinking water system to ensure continuous protection of the drinking water quality.

**Monitor** by collecting and testing samples of the drinking water for E. coli and total coliforms prior to seasonal opening, if your drinking water system has been closed for more than 60 days and throughout operation of your system.

**Test and monitor your SDWS routinely for the following:**

- Turbidity;
- Chlorine residual throughout the distribution system;
- Any chemicals as directed by the PHI;
- Leaks in the pipes.

**Monitor** the signage for systems that are currently posted.

### Licensed laboratories

All bacterial and chemical samples must be tested at a laboratory licensed by the Ministry of the Environment.

**Fact sheet:**

*Sampling & Testing: Working Together to Safeguard our Health*

## NOTIFY

Do you know whom to **NOTIFY** when there is a problem with the water in your SDWS?

**Notify** the users immediately of any unsafe conditions to protect them from becoming ill.

You should provide users with instructions on how to obtain an alternate source of drinking water.

**Notify** the local medical officer of health (MOH) of any unsafe conditions with your SDWS.

- Follow any other requirements of the SDWS Regulations or as directed by the PHI.

**Notify** the users of the SDWS by:

- Direct verbal notification (with small numbers of users);
- Written instructions (to provide additional instructions – e.g., boil water or use bottled water);
- Posted signage (placed at all access points – e.g., water fountains and common taps).

**Fact sheet:**

*Response to Adverse Events: Working Together to Safeguard our Health*

## An introduction to operating a small drinking water system

Did you know that effective December 1, 2008, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) has oversight of small drinking water systems (SDWS) in Ontario? There are two new regulations under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* that came into force at that time.

- Ontario Regulation 318/08 (*Transitional - Small Drinking Water Systems*) carries forward the main requirements of Ontario Regulation 252/05 under the *Safe Drinking Water Act*. It will be in effect until a public health inspector (PHI) conducts a risk assessment of your SDWS and issues a binding directive with site-specific requirements, at which time Ontario Regulation 319/08 will apply to your SDWS;
- Ontario Regulation 319/08 (*Small Drinking Water Systems*) sets out the new requirements that must be followed by each SDWS. This may include minimum quarterly testing for E. coli and total coliforms, once a directive has been issued for the SDWS.

### Do you operate a small drinking water system?

If your system makes drinking water available to the public and you do not get your drinking water from a municipal drinking water system, you may be an owner or operator of a SDWS.

**Some examples are systems that supply water to:** a sit-down restaurant, hotel, motel, trailer park, campground, gas station, marina, place of worship, recreational facility, club or fraternal organization, or other facilities that provide the general public with access to a washroom, drinking water fountain or shower.

### Contact your local public health unit if you may be operating a SDWS

**Remember...** this poster is an introduction and overview of the recent changes to Ontario's small drinking water systems program.

- It is only a summary of your legal responsibilities as the owner or operator of a SDWS. You must refer to the requirements in the SDWS Regulations and any directives issued under Ontario Regulation 319/08.
- This guide has been prepared to help you learn your basic duties as an operator of a SDWS.

## Learn about your local public health unit

### Did you know that...

**The public health inspector (PHI)** is an accredited public health professional who will be delivering the new SDWS program.

- The PHI is one of the most important partners who will provide directions to help you to provide safe water to the users of your SDWS.
- The PHI works for the local public health unit (PHU) to keep your community safe. In addition to delivering the SDWS program and keeping our restaurants safe, the PHI also:
  - Educates the public on a variety of illnesses such as Rabies and West Nile Virus;
  - Investigates, consults and responds to health hazard complaints, adverse water quality incidents, spills and indoor air quality complaints;

- Helps to control the spread of communicable diseases such as food-related and water-related illnesses caused by E. coli, Listeria and Salmonella bacteria.

**The medical officer of health** (usually called the MOH) is the head of the local public health unit.

- The MOH oversees the delivery of the Ontario Public Health Standards and Protocols in partnership with a highly trained group of public health professionals in your community.
- PHIs, public health nurses, nutritionists, epidemiologists and other staff also work at public health units.

**Your local public health unit** is governed by a board of health that comprises members of your regional or municipal areas.

### Where can I find additional information?

#### Please remember...

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

- *Procedure for Disinfection of Drinking Water in Ontario*
- *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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.health.gov.on.ca)

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

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

- Current list of licensed laboratories: [www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/water/sdwa/licensedlabs.php](http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/water/sdwa/licensedlabs.php)

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

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

You can request to be added to the mailing list to stay current on small drinking water systems by sending an email to: [environmental.health@ontario.ca](mailto:environmental.health@ontario.ca)