

Small Drinking Water Systems: Operator Training

Working Together to Safeguard our Health

What are the first steps to providing safe drinking water?

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? The MOHLTC has prepared a brochure – *An Introduction to Operating a Small Drinking Water System to help you to become familiar with the changes to Ontario’s drinking water legislation*. Reading this brochure 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*) as an owner or operator of a SDWS, you are required to provide users with safe drinking water at all times. It is your responsibility to know your responsibilities under the regulations. This starts with designating an operator who is responsible for the safe operation of the SDWS.

A public health inspector 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 public health inspector (PHI), obtain fact sheets or other SDWS information.

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

The owner of a SDWS is responsible for ensuring that all operators of the SDWS 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:

- Understanding and applying a multi-barrier approach to protecting your small drinking water system.
- Self-directed learning.
- Educational material available from the local health unit.
- Other training, including courses approved by the Ministry of the Environment (MOE).

1. Applying a multi-barrier approach

A well operated drinking water system should use a multi-barrier approach to protect the quality of the water. This approach helps to provide safe water from source to tap. The main components include:

- Protect: Protecting your raw water source(s).

- **Treat:** Effectively treating your drinking water.
- **Maintain:** Maintaining a safe distribution system.
- **Monitor:** Testing your water frequently to confirm water quality.
- **Notify:** Informing the users when problems occur.

2. 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:

- the 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.

3. Educational material available from your local health unit

- Your local health unit is an excellent resource for finding out how best to become informed about operating a safe drinking water system.

- The public health inspector will provide you with onsite training on certain aspects of your small drinking water systems.
- Other education and training options may be offered by local water quality associations or professional associations.

4. Other training

This includes any training program that has been required by the PHI, through the directive issued on your system, 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 at:

- By telephone at (905) 796-2851.
- By visiting their 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.
- 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

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC):

www.health.gov.on.ca

- Current list of local public health units:

www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/contact/phu/phuloc_mn.html

Ministry of the Environment (MOE):

www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/index.php

- Current list of licensed private 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/

