

Noncommunity Public Water Systems in Minnesota

Background

Public Water Systems (PWSs) have at least 15 service connections or regularly serve an average of 25 or more people per day for at least 60 days per year. PWSs that provide safe drinking water to year-round residents (for more than six months) are community PWSs. All others are noncommunity PWSs that provide safe drinking water to people where they work, gather, and play.

- The federal Safe Drinking Water Act and Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4720 require that all PWSs provide a safe and adequate supply of water.
- There are about 6000 noncommunity PWSs in Minnesota.

There are two types of noncommunity PWSs, nontransient and transient.



Nontransient

PWSs serve at least 25 of the same people, such as students or employees, on a regular basis, for more than six months per year. These systems include schools, offices, factories, and childcare facilities. Nontransient PWSs must meet standards for those contaminants that can have a health impact from acute exposure (e.g., bacteria and nitrate) as well as those that can have health impacts from long-term/chronic exposure (e.g., metals, pesticides or industrial chemicals).



Transient

PWSs do not meet the definition of either community PWSs or nontransient PWSs. These are often restaurants, resorts,

campgrounds, or religious institutions. Transient PWSs must meet standards for contaminants that can have health impacts from acute exposure; (e.g., bacteria and nitrate).

Responsibilities of the Public Water System

This information sheet provides general information about the responsibilities of noncommunity PWSs and roles of the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) in providing safe drinking water.

Health Standards

Drinking water must meet federal standards for contaminants in the water that can have health impacts from either acute or long-term exposure. The contaminants can be naturally occurring or a result of human activities.

Sampling

MDH collects the majority of the required water samples. Some PWSs are required to do the collecting of specific samples.

Corrective Action

If a water quality problem is identified, the PWS is required to take action to correct the problem, for example, needed repairs or disinfection. The PWS is responsible for the costs of these corrective actions.

Public Notification

The PWS must inform the water users of water quality problems and violations.

Source Water Protection

PWSs must take actions to protect their water source(s). This may include assuring that potential contamination sources are properly managed and located at an appropriate distance from the source of water. Nontransient systems with wells

must also complete a wellhead protection plan.

Plan Submission

Prior approval is required for any modifications to the water system; it is particularly important when installing treatment to manage regulated contaminants. MDH staff must be consulted before modifying the water system.

Recordkeeping

Sampling results, inspection records, and other correspondence from MDH must be kept on file by the public water system.

Water Operator

All nontransient PWSs such as schools, childcare centers, factories, and other businesses must have at least one certified operator. Minimum qualifications, which include continuing education, must be met.

Surface Water Treatment

PWSs using a surface water source, such as a lake or river, must maintain specific filtration and disinfection treatment and meet the requirements of the federal Surface Water Treatment Rule.

Roles of MDH

Water Sampling

MDH collects the majority of the required water samples. MDH pays for the costs of analyzing the samples.

Inspections

MDH staff routinely conduct inspections at all PWSs to determine compliance and identify potential issues with the water system.

Technical Assistance

MDH staff, located in offices around the state, are available to help with resolving

water quality problems and preventing future occurrences.

Plan Review

MDH reviews plans for new well construction and changes made to the existing water system. MDH pays for the cost of plan review.

Penalties

MDH generally tries to correct water quality problems through cooperative efforts with the water system owner. However, administrative orders, monetary penalties, or legal action may also be used to encourage PWSs to correct problems.

For More Information

MDH Drinking Water Protection District Offices

Bemidji – 218-308-2100
Duluth – 218-302-6166
Fergus Falls – 218-332-5150
Mankato – 507-344-2700
Marshall – 507-476-4220
Metro – 651-201-4700
Rochester – 507-206-2700
St. Cloud – 320-223-7300

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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-4700. Printed on recycled paper.