



What is a water supplier required to do?

The following is an Excerpt from Drinking Water Officers Guide, part A, 2014 (pp20-25), available in its entirety at <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/water-quality/drinking-water-quality/how-drinking-water-is-protected-in-bc>

The following comments provide a basic summary of the obligations imposed on water suppliers by the Act and Regulation. References are made to the relevant sections of the Act and Regulation, and these sections should be consulted to determine the specific nature and extent of obligations imposed.

It should be noted that, in some cases, the relevant sections of the Act impose requirements only on “prescribed” water supply systems, meaning those specified as such in the Regulation. The Regulation provides (in section 4) that all water supply systems are prescribed as being covered by the requirements of sections 8, 10 11 and 22(1)(b) of the Act, and all systems except “small systems” are prescribed for the purposes of section 9 of the act.

Potable water

Generally speaking, all water suppliers must supply water which is potable and meets any requirements set out in the operating permit or regulations. “Potable” is defined in section 1 to mean “(a) meets the standards prescribed by regulations, and (b) safe to drink and fit for domestic purposes without further treatment”.

The Regulation also requires all surface water to be “disinfected”. Unlike the former *Safe Drinking Water Regulation* under the *Health Act*, there is no discretion to exempt people from this requirement. (See Act, section 1 and 6, Regulation, section 5)

Exception: “small systems” are not required to meet the potability requirements if the system does not provide water for human consumption or food preparation and is not connected to a system that does, or if each recipient of water from the system has a point of entry or point of use treatment system²¹ that makes the water potable. (See Act section 1 and 6 and Regulation section 1 and 3.1)

Construction permits

Persons may only construct a water supply system if they obtain a construction permit in advance. (See Act section 7 and Regulation section 6)

Exception: for “small systems” the requirement for a construction permit may be waived by an issuing official (Regulation section 6[3] [c])

Operating permits

Water suppliers must not operate a water supply system without an operating permit and must comply with the terms and conditions of the permit. (See Act section 8 and Regulation section 7)

Operator Training

Persons must not operate a water supply system unless they meet the operator training certification requirements set out in the regulations. (See Act section 9, Regulation section 12)

Exception: “small systems” are not required to meet any operator training certification requirements unless their operating permit so specifies.

Emergency response plans

Water suppliers must have written emergency response and contingency plans (See Act section 10, Regulation section 13)

Monitoring

Water suppliers must engage in sample monitoring as required by the regulations, operating permit and directions of a drinking water officer (See Act section 11, Regulation section 8). This includes monitoring for total coliform and, effective April 1, 2006, *Escherichia coli*.

Laboratory reports

Laboratories must immediately report to water suppliers, the drinking water officer and the medical health officer if test results respecting *E-coli* and fecal coliform do not meet specified standards. Laboratories must also advise drinking water officers of other information if the drinking water officer so requests. Water suppliers must immediately advise the drinking water officer that they have been notified by the labs in such cases. (See Act section 12, Regulation section 9)

Notifying drinking water officer

Water suppliers must immediately notify the drinking water of threats officer of other threats to drinking water if they become aware of them. (See Act, section 13)

Public notice of threats

Water suppliers must provide public notice of threats to drinking water if requested by a drinking water officer. (See Act section 14, Regulation section 10) Also, if a laboratory advises that an immediate reporting requirement exists, or the supplier is otherwise aware of a potential drinking water health hazard, and the drinking water officer cannot be immediately contacted, the water supplier must notify the users of the water supply system immediately, in accordance with emergency response and contingency plans. In this case, no request or order from a drinking water officer is required. (See Act section 14, Regulation section 10)

Publication of other information

Water suppliers are required to make various other types of information public in accordance with the regulations and requirements of the drinking water officer. This includes information regarding emergency response plans and contingency plans, an annual report of monitoring, and information concerning assessments. (See Act section 15, Regulation section 11).

Flood-proofing of wells

Owners and operators of wells must flood proof them if required by the regulations. (See Act section 16, Regulation section 14)

Assessments

Water suppliers must conduct water source and system assessments of water supply systems, if required by the regulations or a drinking water officer (See Act section 19) and must address cross connections if required to do in an assessment response plan.

Drinking Water Protection Plan

If directed by a drinking water officer, a water supplier is required to participate in the development of a drinking water protection plan. (See Act section 33[1][a])

Other

In various other circumstances, drinking water officers have the ability to make requests or orders and impose requirements on water suppliers under the Act. Water suppliers must comply with those requests, orders and requirements.