

Water Board Basics: Keys for Success

Safe Drinking Water Act Compliance

In a Nutshell

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), established in 1974, protects the quality of drinking water in the United States. The SDWA focuses on all water designated for human consumption, whether from surface or groundwater sources serving more than 25 people.

The Act authorizes the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to establish safe standards of purity and requires all public water system owners or operators to comply with primary (health-related) standards. State governments, which assume this power from EPA through primacy, also encourage secondary standard attainment.

The Safe Drinking Water Act

Congress passed the SDWA in response to concerns about drinking water supply contaminants throughout the United States and the inefficient manner that states supervised and monitored these drinking water supplies.

Setting national contaminant-based primary and secondary

drinking water standards was a major focus of the 1974 SDWA.

The *primary standards* address adverse health effects. They consist of maximum contaminant levels goals (MCLGs), which are non-enforceable, and maximum contaminant levels (MCLs), which are enforceable limits set as close to MCLGs as possible. The enforceable MCLs consider attainment cost and feasibility.



Secondary standards address aesthetics, such as the odor or appearance of drinking water but are non-enforceable.

Under the SDWA, only public water systems are subject to drinking water standards. A “public water system” is a system that provides piped water for human consumption and has at least 15 service connections or regularly serves at least 25 individuals.

Regulations require public water systems to meet MCLs and/or to use treatment techniques to protect against adverse health effects. Regulations include pre-

- 🔑 Safe Drinking Water Act Compliance
- 🔑 Board Meetings
- 🔑 Board Responsibilities
- 🔑 Budgets
- 🔑 Capital Improvements
- 🔑 Legal Responsibilities
- 🔑 Meter Replacement Program
- 🔑 Operational Record Keeping
- 🔑 Selecting an Engineer
- 🔑 Successful Fundraising

**Nevada Bureau
of Health
Protection Services**

1179 Fairview Drive
Carson City, Nevada 89701

775/687-4750

fax 775/687-3218

www.state.nv.us/health/bhps

Support for this project was provided by the Nevada Drinking Water State Revolving Fund — A federal program administered by the Nevada Bureau of Health Protection Services to provide technical assistance and loan funds to Nevada private and public water systems to ensure federal Safe Drinking Water Act regulation compliance.

scribed testing, record keeping, reporting and timely public notification of failure to meet applicable drinking water standards.

The SDWA Amendments

When the SDWA was amended in 1986, Congress required that EPA develop 25 new MCLs every three years. The 1986 amendments also established the Surface Water Treatment Rule and the Total Coliform Rule.

The SDWA was again amended in 1996. The 1996 amendments authorized the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund (DWSRF) program.

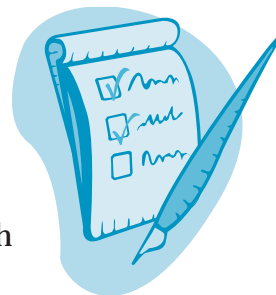
This federal grant program provides money to states, which then make loans to water systems to upgrade facilities and ensure compliance with drinking water standards.

The 1996 amendments authorized \$1 billion per year from fiscal years 1995-2003 to capitalize the DWSRFs. Individual states must provide a 20 percent match to the federal share allocated to them.

The 1996 amendments also required that community water systems provide their users with a Consumer Confidence Report (CCR), which is similar to a nutritional label, by July 1 of every year.

Consumer Confidence Report Checklist

- ✓ The drinking water source and its susceptibility to contamination
- ✓ How to obtain a copy of the Source Water Assessment
- ✓ The level of any water contaminant found and the EPA standard for that contaminant
- ✓ Likely source and health effects of contaminants
- ✓ An accounting of the actions taken to restore safe drinking water following contamination
- ✓ An educational statement about avoiding Cryptosporidium
- ✓ Information on nitrate, arsenic and lead if detected above 50 percent of EPA standards
- ✓ Compliance information on other state and federal drinking water requirements;
- ✓ The utility telephone number and the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline telephone number.



This Water Board Basic was authored by Micheline Fairbank, Rural Community Assistance Corporation.



**Rural Community
Assistance Corporation**
www.rcac.org

777 E. William St., Suite 109
Carson City, Nevada 89701
Phone: 775/882-8887
Fax: 775/882-8960

*Rural Community Assistance Corporation
is dedicated to assisting rural communities
achieve their goals and visions by
providing training, technical assistance
and access to resources*