

Operational Guideline for Manitoba Water Suppliers

Drinking Water Advisories

PURPOSE

This guideline has been established to ensure that public and semi-public drinking water suppliers throughout the Province of Manitoba meet their regulatory requirements with regard to effectively administering a drinking water advisory.

Legislation

[The Drinking Water Safety Act](#) requires a water supplier to immediately notify a drinking water officer of any adverse condition that affects or may affect the ability of the water system to provide a safe supply of drinking water. If in the opinion of the medical officer, the safety of the drinking water cannot be assured, a drinking water advisory will be issued. *The Drinking Water Safety Act* specifies instructions on water use, notification requirements for water supplies and direction on rescinding drinking water advisories

Operating Licence

Section 3 Operating – Emergencies

If a Medical Officer of Health, the Director of the Office of Drinking Water, or a Drinking Water Officer issues a water advisory on the water system, the Licensee shall provide notice of the advisory to all water users in accordance with the Advisory Notification Plan or by a method acceptable to the issuer.

Drinking Water Advisories

Drinking water advisories are issued to a water system by a Medical Officer of Health due to a confirmed or suspected water quality problem.

Drinking water advisories can affect the whole distribution system or part of a distribution system and depending on the contaminate and level of risk to water users; the Medical Officer of Health may issue a boil water advisory, drinking water avoidance advisory or a water quality advisory/notice.

Boil water advisories (BWA) are issued in instances where drinking water may be compromised by bacteria or micro-organisms and water users are advised not to consume the water

unless it is boiled for one minute, or otherwise disinfected.

Drinking water avoidance advisories (DWAA) are issued in instances where drinking water is compromised by contaminants that cannot be killed or removed by boiling the water. Water users are asked to use an alternate safe source of water such as bottled water.

Water quality advisories (WQA) and Water quality notices (WQN) are issued in instances where drinking water may pose a low risk to health and water users can take actions to reduce their risk other than boiling the water.

Contents of a Drinking Water Advisory

A drinking water advisory consists of two documents: an advisory letter and a Public Notice.

The advisory letter is addressed to the water supplier and provides information on why the advisory was issued, area affected, recommended water use, notification requirements and corrective actions and conditions that must be taken or be in place before the advisory can be rescinded.

The Public Notice informs water users of the reason the advisory was issued, area affected, recommended water use, where they can get additional information, and the estimated duration of the advisory.

Water Supplier Responsibilities

Water suppliers must immediately notify everyone receiving water from the affected water supply or within a specified area that a drinking water advisory has been issued and to take the protective actions specified in the Public Notice.

Water suppliers with Advisory Notification Plans will activate their plan. Water suppliers that are not required to submit and maintain an Advisory Notification Plan must ensure all water users are duly notified.

In addition to posting the advisory Notice in public places, notification can be achieved by

- hand delivery;

Sustainable Development

- publishing in newspapers;
- broadcasting on radio or television;
- posting in publicly accessible locations;
- other means as required by the Medical Officer of Health;
- or any combination thereof

Water suppliers are encouraged to preplan so that the Notice can be distributed to water users as quickly as possible.

Water users include:

- The general public (those who live in homes, apartments, mobile home parks)
- Work places
- Public buildings such as restaurants, hotels, tourism establishments
- Special water users ex., hospitals, personal care homes, schools, food processing facilities etc

Some water users may require special messaging regarding water use. The drinking water officer must be informed of all types of water users that are affected by the drinking water advisory to ensure messaging is appropriate.

On-going Notification

Drinking water advisories typically last only a few days therefore on-going notification is not required.

Where significant upgrades are required to correct the problem, drinking water advisories will remain in place until upgrades are completed and the water is safe for consumption.

If the advisory is in place for longer than 12 months, the drinking water officer will prepare a Public Notice and request that the water supplier deliver the Public Notice as a reminder to all water users that the advisory remains in place.

Water suppliers on long term advisories are required to deliver the Public Notice to all water users every 6 months until the advisory has been rescinded.

Water suppliers may also be asked to remind water users that the advisory remains in place if routine monitoring indicates a significant change in water quality for example *E-coli* present in the distributed water.

On-going notification can be accomplished by sending the Public Notice to all water users through regular municipal correspondence for example tax bills. Water suppliers are to ensure publicly accessible locations remain posted and any new water users are made aware of the advisory.

Many water systems under long-term advisory have restrictions on expansion. Contact your Regional Drinking Water Officer prior to planning any expansions to your water system.

Rescinding the Advisory

Once the water supplier has undertaken the rescind conditions as stated on the advisory letter to the satisfaction of the Medical Officer of Health and the water is deemed to be safe for consumption, the Medical Officer of Health will send a letter advising the water supplier that the advisory has been rescinded.

Only a Medical Officer of Health can rescind a drinking water advisory

It is the water suppliers' responsibility to notify water users that the advisory has been rescinded and that they may return to normal use of the water.

Additional information

For a list of water systems under drinking water advisories see [Water Advisory Listings](#) or for a map of water systems under drinking water advisories see [Water Advisory Map](#)

For Boil Water Advisory Fact Sheets

- [For Manitoba Water System Users](#)
- [For All Domestic Water Uses](#)
- [For Commercial/Public Facilities](#)

Health Links at 204-788-8200 or toll free at 1-888-315- 9257.

Office of Drinking Water

[Regional Drinking Water Officers](#) are available for operational and monitoring advice and to provide technical assistance.

After hours, please call the Environmental Emergency Response line at 204-944-4888 and ask for the on-call drinking water officer

For more information related to Manitoba's drinking water and how it is regulated visit:

www.manitoba.ca/drinkingwater