

# *Providing Safe Drinking Water to the Public*

What are my responsibilities to ensure safe drinking water under the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and O. Reg. 170/03?

A guide for owners and operators of

## **NON-MUNICIPAL YEAR-ROUND RESIDENTIAL DRINKING WATER SYSTEMS**

These drinking water systems include privately owned systems that serve:

- apartment buildings with six or more residential units
- private subdivisions with six or more houses
- condominium or townhouse complexes with six or more residential units
- mobile home parks with six or more homes
- trailer parks supplying water year-round to six or more sites with water service hookup.

**Updated with amendments to O. Reg. 170/03**

## Table of Contents: A Drinking Water System Checklist

<input type="checkbox"/> Introduction	Page 3
<input type="checkbox"/> Summary of requirements	Page 4
<input type="checkbox"/> Does this guide apply to my drinking water system?	Page 5
<input type="checkbox"/> Determining your water source	Page 5
<input type="checkbox"/> Nine steps to providing safe drinking water:	
• Step 1: Register your drinking water system	Page 6
• Step 2: Select a licensed laboratory	Page 6
• Step 3: Take drinking water samples for testing	Page 7
• Step 4: Determine minimum treatment requirements for your drinking water system	Page 14
• Step 5: Ensure maintenance and operational checks are carried out	Page 17
• Step 6: Make required notification of adverse test results and other problems	Page 19
• Step 7: Take corrective action if required	Page 20
• Step 8: Post warning notices of potential problems whenever required	Page 23
• Step 9: Prepare an annual report and retain records	Page 24
<input type="checkbox"/> Who can I contact for more information?	Page 24

An on-line version of this guide can be found at [www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater)



## A: Introduction

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and the Drinking Water Systems Regulation (O.Reg. 170/03), owners and operators of drinking water systems that supply water to the public have responsibilities to ensure the water is safe to drink. This guide outlines the responsibilities of owners or operators of drinking water systems that supply water to certain non-municipal year-round residential developments. Following this guide and ensuring compliance with the regulation will help to ensure that public health is protected and that drinking water standards are maintained.

### Remember, this guide is only a summary

To be clear about your specific requirements, you must refer to the text of the Drinking Water Systems Regulation (O. Reg. 170/03) and the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002. You can access these at: [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca) or by calling our Public Information Centre at: 1-800-565-4923. If you have any legal questions about the application or interpretation of the regulation or legislation, you should consult a lawyer.

## Summary of requirements

This chart gives a summary of your drinking water system requirements. The guide gives further details.

System registration	All non-municipal year-round residential drinking water systems must register with the Ministry of the Environment (the ministry). This information is stored in the ministry's Drinking Water Information System (DWIS).
Microbiological sampling/testing of the raw water	Only for systems with a source that is ground water or ground water under the direct influence of surface water (known as a source). Collect samples every month from each well in the system, prior to any form of treatment, and submit to a licensed laboratory for testing ( <i>E. coli</i> and total coliforms only).
Microbiological sampling/testing of the drinking water in the distribution system or plumbing	Collect and submit samples to a licensed laboratory for testing every two weeks if the system is providing treatment in accordance with the regulation, or weekly if no such treatment is installed. Testing for <i>E. coli</i> and total coliforms is required for all systems - heterotrophic plate count (HPC) must also be tested if the distribution system is required to have secondary disinfection (chlorine residual).
Chemical sampling/testing except for lead	Collect and submit samples from the point or cold water tap where water enters the distribution system or plumbing (unless otherwise specified, for example, plumbing and distribution samples for lead testing) and submit to a licensed laboratory for testing. Testing frequencies range from once every three months to once every 60 months depending on the chemical, but most chemicals are required to be tested only once every 60 months.
Community lead sampling/testing and associated other sampling and testing	<p>Collect, and submit to a licensed laboratory for lead testing, samples from the plumbing in private residences and non-residential buildings and from the distribution system. Samples must be collected and tested twice every year ("winter" and "summer"). The number of sampling locations depends on the size of the population served by the system. The testing frequency drops to twice a year every three years and the number of sampling locations drops by roughly 50 per cent after two sets of very good results or four sets of acceptable results. Under certain conditions, systems serving populations of less than 50,000 may qualify for an exemption from lead sampling in plumbing.</p> <p>Unlike for other required sampling, the sample collection for lead testing must be done by a qualified person who, at the time of the sample collection, must also conduct a pH test and, for the distribution sampling locations, also collect a sample for alkalinity testing. The sample for alkalinity testing may be sent to the laboratory along with the samples for lead testing or tested separately by a qualified person. Depending on the specific qualification of the person collecting the samples and conducting the pH tests, this person may or may not be qualified to conduct the alkalinity tests.</p>
Water treatment	Ensure treatment equipment is installed and operated in accordance with the regulation, unless the conditions for a regulatory exemption have been met.
Operational checks	Routine maintenance and operational checks are required to be carried out, and monitoring for chlorine residual and for turbidity may be required, depending on your system. A person under the supervision of a certified operator can perform chlorine residual and turbidity testing, but equipment adjustments and maintenance checks must be done by a certified operator.
Engineering evaluation reports	A licensed engineering practitioner must prepare a report on installed treatment equipment that includes a maintenance schedule and a statement confirming that all equipment is being installed in accordance with the regulation. Subsequent reports are only required if alterations are carried out to the system.
Annual reports	These must be prepared every year and a copy kept on-site to be made available to the public and the Ministry of the Environment upon request. A copy may also need to be sent to each designated facility served by the system and the interested authority for each such designated facility if there are any designated facilities (e.g. schools, day nurseries, nursing homes, etc.) served by the system.
Adverse test results and other problems	Report adverse test results and other problems related to improper disinfection to authorities and take corrective action.

## B: Does this guide apply to my drinking water system?

This guide APPLIES to you if you own or operate a non-municipal year-round residential drinking water system.

A non-municipal year-round residential system is a drinking water system that supplies water on a year-round basis to:

- a residential development with six or more private residences (e.g. apartment buildings, private subdivisions, condominiums, townhouse complexes, mobile home parks) or
- a trailer park that is supplying water year-round to six or more sites with water service hookup.

This guide DOES NOT apply to you if:

- your drinking water system does not serve a residential development or trailer park described above
- you operate a seasonal drinking water system (a non-municipal seasonal residential system which does not operate for at least 60 days at a time to supply water to a major residential development or to a trailer park or campground with six or more service connections) or
- your drinking water system is connected to, and obtains all of its water from, a municipal residential drinking water system or another system that meets the testing and treatment requirements of O. Reg. 170/03.

**Note:** If your system is connected to and receives all of its water from another regulated system that meets the treatment requirements of O. Reg. 170/03, please refer to section 5 of the regulation for more details about specific requirements that apply to your system.

## C: Determining your drinking water source

All drinking water systems draw from raw water supplies, such as ground water or surface water, unless they are receiving treated water from another regulated system. This guide describes specific requirements that apply to the various drinking water sources:

1. Ground water (secure wells)
2. Ground water under direct influence of surface water (GUDI -- wells which may be subject to surface water contamination)
3. Surface water (lakes, rivers and streams)
4. Transported water (treated water brought in from other regulated systems and stored on-site, e.g. cisterns).

**GUDI (Ground Water Under the Direct Influence of surface water) refers to a well which may be subject to surface water contamination.**

## D: Nine steps to providing safe drinking water

### Step 1: Register your drinking water system

- **All non-municipal year-round residential drinking water systems must be registered with the Ministry of the Environment (ministry).** Registration information helps meet our shared commitment to provide safe, clean water for the people of Ontario.
- To register, complete the *Drinking Water System Categorization Questionnaire* and the *Drinking Water System Profile Information forms* available at the ministry's Drinking Water Ontario website:  
www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater under Forms. Once complete, email them to: Reg170\_formsubmission.moe@ontario.ca. While email submission is preferred, you can also fax your completed forms to 416-314-8716.
- Once you have registered, you will be sent a letter with your drinking water system number (DWS#) and category. Use this DWS# for reference purposes when contacting the registration team.
- You must register within 30 days of beginning operations.
- Any changes to your drinking water system information must be submitted via email on the *Drinking Water System Profile Information* form to Reg170\_formsubmission.moe@ontario.ca within 10 days of the change.
- If you have any questions about registration, call the Registration Help Desk at 1-866-793-2588.

### Step 2: Select a licensed laboratory

- Regulated drinking water systems must have their water tested on a routine basis. Drinking water samples must be sent to a laboratory licensed by the ministry for specific testing of microbiological and/or chemical parameters. (See box on next page for information about finding a licensed laboratory).
- It is important that you contact the licensed laboratory directly to arrange for testing PRIOR to submitting samples to them.
- Before sending your samples to a licensed laboratory for the first time, you must submit the *Laboratory Services Notification* form to the ministry (available online at Drinking Water Ontario www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater under Forms) which identifies the licensed laboratory(ies) that you have hired and the specific testing they will be performing.
- It is extremely important that your registration information is fully completed and up to date at all times. Test results will not be considered by the ministry unless all of this information is included in laboratory submissions.
- It is strongly recommended that you provide the name of a back-up licensed microbiological laboratory on your *Laboratory Services Notification* form in case the primary laboratory encounters equipment or testing problems. As an owner you are required to submit a *Laboratory Services Notification* form to the ministry each time you change or hire new laboratories for testing.
- Your licensed laboratories must send a written report of all results to you within 28 days of approving the results. Your results are also submitted electronically to the ministry.
- If the licensed laboratory finds an adverse test result, they must notify you, the ministry, and the local medical officer of health immediately by telephone. The laboratory must then fax the adverse test results to the ministry and the local medical officer of health within 24 hours. Pages 19-23 of this guide explain the procedures you must follow if this happens.

### Finding a licensed laboratory

- To hire a licensed laboratory for testing, view the list of licensed laboratories on the ministry's website: [www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/water/sdwa/licensedlabs.php](http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/water/sdwa/licensedlabs.php) or contact the Public Information Centre at 1-800-565-4923, or contact a laboratory directly. Be sure to ask them if they are appropriately licensed by the Ministry of the Environment for specific testing of your drinking water.
- While some of the larger laboratories may be licensed for all of the required tests under the regulation, some licensed laboratories only test microbiological parameters (*E. coli*, total coliforms and HPC) while others test only chemical parameters (e.g. arsenic or benzene, etc.).

### Step 3: Take drinking water samples for testing

Note: the instructions below do not apply to community sampling and testing for lead. See page 10 for those instructions.

- Licensed laboratories must provide you with sample containers and instructions on how to collect, transport, and store the samples taken from your drinking water system. Common instructions include: removing screens/filters at any taps; allowing the water to run for at least two minutes; not touching or otherwise contaminating sample bottles; capping bottles immediately; leaving airspace so that the bottle does not overflow; and preventing splashing.
- Pay particular attention to the instructions for sample temperature. Do not freeze samples. Make sure that if samples are being transported in a vehicle that they are kept in a cooler with ice packs or other means to keep them cool.
- Whenever a sample is collected, the person taking the sample must record the date and time the sample was taken, the location where the sample was taken and the sampler's name on the *Chain of Custody* form. (This form can be obtained from your

laboratory). The laboratory's *Chain of Custody* form will be customized for your drinking water system and sent to the sampler with the sampling containers.

- Once the samples are submitted to the licensed laboratory, staff will record details of the samples (i.e. date/time the samples were received, analysis and testing details, final test results, etc.).

### What are my MICROBIOLOGICAL sampling and testing requirements?

#### How often samples need to be taken and submitted for testing

##### Raw water sampling:

- Ground water and GUDI: minimum once a month from any well that serves as a raw water supply
- Surface water: none required
- Transported water: none required, but the storage container that receives the water (e.g. cistern) should be constructed and maintained in a manner that prevents surface water and other foreign materials from coming into contact with the treated drinking water.

**Distribution sampling** (drinking water taken from distribution or plumbing fixtures such as taps):

- Once every two weeks if treatment is provided in accordance with the regulation
- Once a week if treatment is not provided in accordance with the regulation (see page 16).

**Note:** If your system is using **point of entry (POE) treatment units** (see page 15) in accordance with the regulation, these distribution samples must be taken on a rotating basis so that a sample is taken from a location downstream of the POE treatment unit in each home and facility supplied by the system at least once every 24 months.

## What licensed laboratories test for

They test for the following bacteria:

- *E. coli*
- Total coliforms
- Heterotrophic plate count or “HPC” (only for distribution samples and only if the distribution system is required to have secondary disinfection, i.e. chlorine residual – see page 14)

HPC is a microbiological laboratory test that gives a measurement of the general bacterial population present within your distribution system or plumbing. HPC results are a good indicator of overall water quality, but not water safety. Drinking water distribution lines are not sterile and some microorganisms can attach to the inner lining of the pipes and grow. There are no reporting or corrective action requirements specified in O. Reg. 170/03 following HPC test results. It is suggested, however, that you monitor your HPC results in order to develop a good sense of what the normal or ‘baseline’ levels of HPC measurements are in water from your system.

If you see an abrupt spike in HPC counts it may indicate a problem with your water, treatment processes, or perhaps the ‘sloughing-off’ (detachment) of the organisms that may have attached and grown on the inner lining of the distribution pipes. You should double-check all your treatment and monitoring equipment, and make sure that all of your system’s maintenance programs have been rigorously followed. A gradual and steady increase in HPC counts can indicate regrowth of organisms in the system and an overall decline in the water quality.

To solve the problem, you may want to raise the frequency with which you flush the distribution lines and increase the overall chlorine residual levels throughout your system. By following these simple steps, the HPC results can be used towards maintaining and improving the overall water quality and management of your system and may help to prevent other problems from occurring.

**Note:** If your drinking water system is using chlorine, then **you must also sample and test for chlorine residual (the chlorine that stays in the lines to prevent microbiological regrowth) using the proper analyzer (see page 18) at the same time and location your microbiological distribution samples are taken.** You must record the chlorine residual value clearly on the *Chain of Custody* form provided by your licensed laboratory. In the event there is a microbiological adverse test result, the laboratory is required to tell the ministry and the local medical officer of health what chlorine level was recorded on the form.

## How soon samples must be taken

- Existing systems should already be sampling their water.
- New systems must begin sampling as soon as they commence operation, and as soon as the *Laboratory Services Notification* form is submitted.

**Note:** If your drinking water system is not in operation for seven days or more, or if, for seven days or more, the system is only supplying water to private residences occupied by the system owner or their family, or by the system owner’s employees, agents or their families, you are not required to perform microbiological sampling and testing during that period. However, upon restarting your system, you must sample, submit samples to your licensed laboratory and receive the results prior to supplying drinking water to users of the system.

## What are my CHEMICAL sampling and testing requirements?

Sampling and testing for organic and inorganic chemicals **other than lead**

Where to sample for all chemicals except lead: (please see next section for details about sampling for lead).

- a point where water enters the distribution system, except for trihalomethanes
- trihalomethanes to be sampled from a system that is providing chlorination or chloramination from a location that is likely to have an elevated potential for the formation of trihalomethanes (e.g. the ends of the lines).

How often samples need to be taken and submitted for testing:

- nitrate and nitrite: at least once every three months
- trihalomethanes (only if your system provides chlorination or chloramination): at least once every three months
- all organic and inorganic parameters listed in Schedules 23 and 24 of O. Reg. 170/03, at least once every 60 months
- sodium and fluoride: At least once every 60 months.

## When new systems must begin sampling

- New systems must start sampling in their first year of operation, according to the frequencies described in this guide.

## Community sampling and testing for lead

Under the regulation there are two kinds of sampling: **standard sampling and reduced sampling**. Reduced sampling can replace standard sampling if the results of your testing meet certain criteria. Systems serving populations less than 50,000 may qualify for an exemption from lead sampling in plumbing. Both are described on page 13.

### 1. Standard sampling

#### How often must samples be taken?

For standard sampling, samples must be taken twice a year during the following periods:

- once between December 15 and April 15 (“winter testing”) and
- once between June 15 and October 15 (“summer testing”).

If a new system starts operation during a sampling period, they should start sampling during that period. If you start operation in between the sampling periods specified above, you should start sampling during the next sampling period after start-up. After each sampling period, owners must record and submit to the ministry the number of points sampled and the number of points where samples exceeded the standard. Record the results on the *O. Reg. 170/03 Community Lead Testing - End of Period Report* available at Drinking Water Ontario [www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) under Forms. Once complete, submit the report within 30 days to the ministry. If you have any questions, call the Registration Help Desk at 1-866-793-2588.

Samples that are taken outside the sampling period are reportable as long as they are taken according to the regulation.

#### Where to sample

Owners and operators must take plumbing samples from a mix of private residences (including single family homes and individual units within multi-unit residential buildings) and non-residential buildings (including commercial and industrial properties, designated facilities and public facilities).

You must also take samples from the distribution system. If there is no distribution system, samples can be taken from plumbing where necessary to do so. The minimum number of sampling locations depends on the population served by your drinking-water system as outlined in the table below.

If owners cannot secure the required number of sampling points according to the table, they must apply to the director with supporting information and documentation to be considered for partial relief. For more information on relief go to the web page on **Drinking Water Ontario entitled Information for Municipal and Non-Municipal Owners and Operating Authorities of Drinking Water Systems** ([www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater)) or contact the ministry’s Approvals and Licensing Section at 416-314-4625.

Minimum number of sampling locations for standard sampling			
Population served by drinking water system	Number of sampling points in plumbing serving private residences	Number of sampling points in plumbing not serving private residences	Number of sampling points in distribution system
1-99	5	1	1
100-499	10	1	2
500-3,299	20	2	4

For larger populations please consult the regulation.

## Sampling procedures for plumbing systems

You must follow the following procedures when taking plumbing samples:

- The occupant of the premises must give consent to sampling.
  - Samples must be taken from:
    - plumbing that is connected or suspected of being connected to lead service pipes or
    - lead plumbing or plumbing that is suspected of being lead plumbing.
  - If this is not reasonably possible, samples may be taken from:
    - plumbing connected to service pipes that are not lead but have lead solder or
    - plumbing that is not lead plumbing but has or is suspected of having lead solder.
  - If no such plumbing exists, then samples may be taken from any other plumbing connected to the system.
- Samples must not be taken from more than one point in the same building, unless the number of buildings served by your system is less than the number of samples required for standard sampling.
  - If your system serves fewer than 100 people and the number of buildings served by the system is less than five, take one sample per building, even if this number is lower than the number of locations on the sampling table. For example, if your system serves only three buildings with private residences, take one sample per building for a total of three samples.
  - If your system serves 100 or more people and the number of buildings served is less than the number of samples required under the standard sampling table, more than one sample can be taken per building in order to meet the requirement. For example, if your system serves 200 people, the table requires you to sample from 10 locations.

### How to take samples from plumbing

*Step one:* Turn on the tap for at least five minutes to flush. The intent of this flushing is to replace the stagnant water within the plumbing serving the sampling tap with water from the water main. It may require longer than five minutes of flushing where the sampling tap is located at some distance from the street. Once flushing is complete and the tap is turned off, the plumbing must not be used for 30-35 minutes. After this time period has passed the samples can be taken.

*Step two:* Take two one-litre samples to send to a licensed laboratory for **lead testing** and then, one sample for **pH testing** to be tested on-site. You may use multiple smaller size bottles if provided by the laboratories. Take the samples in the following sequence:

- Put a sampling container for the first one-litre sample under the tap and turn the tap on so that water flows into the container at a rate that is similar to normal use of the tap. Make sure water doesn't splash out of the sampling container. The first one-litre sample must include the first water that comes out when the tap is turned on after the plumbing was not used for 30 to 35 minutes.

This sample must be clearly marked as the first sample.

- Take the second one-litre sample immediately after the first sample (this sample must be clearly marked as the second sample) and the third sample immediately after the second sample without turning the tap off or changing its flow rate, and with as little as possible spillage between the samples.

*Step three:* Conduct the pH test on the third sample immediately after taking the second sample. The pH test results must be given with at least two significant digits (e.g. pH 7.4 or pH 7.0 but not pH 7).

*Step four:* Record the sampling details for the first two-litre samples on the *Chain of Custody* form that the laboratory provides.

*Step five:* Record the pH results for your system's records. These results are not sent to the laboratory but must be kept and made available as required by regulation.

*Step six:* Following the sample handling and transport directions given to you by your licensed laboratory, send the first and second one-litre samples to a licensed laboratory for testing.

If your system only serves three buildings with private residences, you can sample from more than one location per building to meet your requirement of 10 samples.

- If possible, plumbing samples must be geographically dispersed.
- All samples to be collected within a building must be collected from a cold water tap.
- Samples are to be collected from a kitchen tap if the building has a kitchen tap, or a tap commonly used to provide water for human consumption if the building has no kitchen tap.
  - If an aerator is installed on the tap, it is not to be removed from the tap.
  - If a treatment device, for example a filter, is installed on or at the tap, bypass the device without removing it if possible.
  - If bypassing is not possible, another kitchen tap or one used to provide water for human consumption may be used.
- If every kitchen tap and tap used for human consumption has a treatment device and none can be bypassed, the sample must come from a tap as described previously, but the device must be removed before sampling and before flushing the tap.

### Sampling Procedures for distribution systems

Distribution system sample(s) must be taken on the same day(s) when plumbing sample(s) are taken, and must be taken from locations as close as reasonably possible to the locations where plumbing samples are taken.

Distribution samples cannot be taken from points in the distribution system where lead levels are likely to be elevated due to materials such as hydrants that are located at or near the sampling point. This is to ensure that samples reflect the quality of water provided to buildings served by the system.

### Who can take the samples and conduct pH tests?

The sample collection and pH testing for the community lead testing program must be done by a person with any one of the following qualifications:

- a certified operator

### How to take samples from distribution systems

*Step one:* Flush the point from where samples are to be taken until the quality of the water at that point is representative of the quality of the water in that part of the distribution system.

*Step two:* Take three samples of the water from the sampling point. These samples may be of any volume specified by the licensed laboratory. The first is for **lead testing**, the second for **total alkalinity** testing and the third for **pH testing**.

*Step three:* Following the collection of the samples, conduct the pH test immediately on the third sample.

*Step four:* Record the sampling details for the first two samples on the *Chain of Custody* form that the laboratory provides. The first sample (for lead testing) must be submitted to a licensed laboratory. The second sample (for total alkalinity testing) may be sent along with the sample for lead testing to the same laboratory. However, there is no legal requirement for alkalinity to be tested by a licensed laboratory. This test may be conducted by a licensed laboratory or by a certified operator, water quality analyst or a person who, in the preceding 36 months, has successfully completed a course approved by the ministry that relates to the operation and maintenance of drinking water systems, including the conduct of an alkalinity test.

*Step five:* Record the pH results for your system's records. These results are not sent to the laboratory but must be kept and made available as required by regulation.

- a water quality analyst
- a trained person (who has completed in the preceding 36 months "Operation Of Small Drinking Water Systems" course offered by the Walkerton Clean Water Centre, [www.wcwc.ca](http://www.wcwc.ca) or 1-866-515-0550), or other course approved by the ministry
- a person who works under the general supervision of a certified operator (and is trained by a certified operator to take samples and conduct pH tests; the results of pH tests must be reported to a certified operator)
- a medical officer of health or a public health inspector (as defined in the Health Protection and Promotion Act).

## 2. Reduced sampling

The standard for lead is 0.010 milligrams per litre which is equivalent to 10 micrograms per litre. A system serving a population of less than 50,000 people may be able to reduce the number of sampling locations and the frequency of sampling and testing if:

- in TWO consecutive “winter” and “summer” periods of testing that are done over one year, not more than 10 per cent of plumbing sample results exceeded 5 micrograms per litre and no plumbing sample results exceeded 10 micrograms per litre, **or**
- in FOUR consecutive rounds of testing (two “winter” and two “summer” periods) not more than 10 per cent of plumbing sample results exceeded 10 micrograms per litre.

Only the higher of the two sample results, that are required to be obtained from each sampling point in the plumbing, is considered for the purpose of qualifying for reduced sampling.

If the system meets the criteria above, the testing frequency drops to two consecutive periods of semi-annual testing **once every three years** AND the number of locations is reduced as shown in the table below.

### When would reduced sampling no longer apply?

The system must revert back to standard sampling if more than 10 per cent of all the plumbing samples taken during any one round of testing (i.e. December to April **or** June to October) exceeded the standard. Of the two samples taken on the same day from the same plumbing location, the sample with the lower

concentration of lead is not considered in the calculations.

## 3. Exemption from lead sampling in plumbing

Your drinking water system is eligible for an exemption from lead sampling in plumbing (only available to systems serving less than 50,000 people) if:

- You are already doing reduced sampling or have been doing plumbing sampling according to an approved relief granted by the ministry and
- Not more than 10 per cent of plumbing results exceeded the lead standard from two consecutive periods of reduced sampling (both “winter” and “summer”) rounds.

Ministry approval is not required for this exemption. It is automatic once the test results have been submitted to the ministry. Once exempt, if future changes impact water chemistry, lead testing in plumbing could be reinstated by the ministry.

Distribution sampling is still required as follows:

- Sample for pH and alkalinity every “winter” and “summer” period
- Sample for lead once every three years, both “winter” and “summer” periods.

Reduced Sampling - minimum number of sampling locations			
Population served by drinking water system	Number of sampling points in plumbing serving private residences	Number of sampling points in plumbing not serving private residences	Number of sampling points in distribution system
1-99	3	0	1
100-499	5	1	1
500-3,299	10	1	2

For larger populations please consult the regulation.

## Step 4: Determine the minimum treatment requirements for your drinking water system

### Treatment basics

Below is a basic summary of treatment processes that will reduce or eliminate the potential for the presence of pathogens (organisms that can cause illness) in your drinking water. Different water sources necessitate different levels of treatment.

You may wish to consult with a licensed engineering practitioner, (see *Engineering Evaluation Report*, page 16) about the different types of treatment technologies that are available to meet your specific treatment requirements.

### Different treatment methods

**Filtration** of raw water removes particles that may hide or protect pathogens such as viruses, bacteria and protozoa, and helps to ensure that effective primary disinfection can be carried out.

- Where filtration is required, the filtration process must occur before the primary disinfection process.
- Filtration technologies include conventional chemically assisted rapid sand filtration, direct chemically assisted rapid sand filtration, slow sand filtration, diatomaceous earth filtration, cartridge/bag filters, and membrane filters. Your licensed engineering practitioner will advise you on the most appropriate technology for your system.

**Primary disinfection** inactivates/removes pathogens before the water is delivered to the first consumer. This usually is accomplished by filtration and chlorine or by filtration and ultraviolet (UV) light or chlorine only, depending on the quality of the raw water source.

- Where *chlorine* is used for primary disinfection, the process must involve a contact time (e.g. in a holding tank) during which the water is exposed to a specified chlorine dose that must be monitored.

- Where *UV or other non-chlorine-based primary disinfection equipment* is used the equipment must have either an automatic shut-off feature or an alarm that notifies the operator if the equipment malfunctions, loses power or is not providing appropriate levels of disinfection. The alarm must sound where the testing equipment is located. If a person is not always present where the equipment is located, then the alarm must sound in a place where someone is present. If an alarm sounds, a certified operator must be dispatched to take appropriate action as soon as possible.

**Secondary disinfection** introduces and maintains a chlorine residual in your distribution system to protect the drinking water from microbiological recontamination or bacterial regrowth.

- Secondary disinfection is required if all parts of the drinking water system and plumbing downstream of the primary disinfection equipment are not enclosed in a building or other protective structure.
- For the purpose of secondary disinfection, chlorination equipment must be operated so that, at all times and at all locations within the distribution system, the free chlorine residual is never less than 0.05 mg/L.
- Often, secondary disinfection is provided by the treatment equipment which supplies primary disinfection. If chlorine-based equipment is used to provide primary disinfection, that same equipment may also be used to provide secondary disinfection. However, where UV light or other non-chlorine-based equipment is used to provide primary disinfection, that equipment is unable to provide secondary disinfection. Therefore, additional chlorine-based equipment would be needed to meet any secondary disinfection requirements.

## Point of entry (POE) treatment

If your system serves 100 or fewer private residences, you can choose the option of meeting requirements using point of entry (POE) treatment units. Point of entry treatment units are primary disinfection units that are installed on the plumbing at or near where water from the system enters a building or other structure. The regulation provides a detailed explanation of POE system requirements and obligations that would allow you to be exempt from secondary disinfection (chlorine residual in the distribution system) requirements.

Some things to consider if you plan to use a point of entry approach towards treatment:

- POE units must be installed on the plumbing of **every** building or other structure that is part of a private residence, designated facility or public facility served by the system – full participation is required.
- All POE units must be owned or leased by the drinking water system owner – you will remain responsible for testing the drinking water quality and maintaining the treatment units, and cannot pass these responsibilities to the homeowners.
- POE units can not use chlorination or chloramination.
- Automatic shut-offs are required on all units.
- Notice must be given to occupants of a property where POE units are located whenever permission to enter a property is required.
- You must ensure that all the users of water on the system are properly informed about the POE units, and that they understand that access to their home or property will be required on a periodic basis to sample the water and to maintain the units. Once the users are informed, submit to the ministry a *Notice of Point of Entry Disclosure for Your Drinking Water Users* (available at: [www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) under Guidance).
- Additional requirements apply - see section 3-1.1 of Schedule 3 of O. Reg. 170/03 for more details.

## Treatment requirements depending on the source of your water

### Ground water source

Unless you obtain exemptions from treatment requirements, your ground water system must have water treatment equipment that is capable of achieving, at all times, **primary disinfection**, including at least 99 per cent removal or inactivation of viruses in accordance with the *Procedure for Disinfection of Drinking Water in Ontario* available at: [www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) under Guidance.

### Surface water or GUDI source

Unless you obtain exemptions from treatment requirements, you must use **filtration** and **primary disinfection** such that the total process is capable at all times of removal or inactivation of 99 per cent of Cryptosporidium oocysts, 99.9 per cent of Giardia cysts, and 99.99 per cent of viruses in accordance with the *Procedure for Disinfection of Drinking Water in Ontario* available at: [www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) under Guidance.

### Distribution systems

Where the treated water is distributed to users through a system of pipes where all or some of the pipes are buried in the ground, primary disinfection must be followed by **secondary disinfection** which introduces and maintains a chlorine residual level in the distribution system.

## Can my system obtain exemptions from treatment?

### Treatment exemptions for wells

If you have an **existing** or **new** system that uses **ground water** as a raw water supply and does not serve a designated facility, you may be able to obtain exemptions from the treatment requirements of the regulation. A notice must be submitted to the ministry through a *Well Technician's Notice*, signed by one of the following: a person who holds a well technician license for well drilling, a licensed engineering practitioner, a hydrogeologist, or a certified engineering technologist who has experience in ground water supply.

For the notice to satisfy the criteria for treatment exemptions, one of these experts must have assessed your well and confirmed that it meets the key factors listed on the form and subsection 2-12 (1) of Schedule 2 of O.Reg 170/03.

In addition, for the exemptions to apply, the notice must also include a statement confirming that you have complied with microbiological testing requirements according to the regulation for the past 12 months and that **no** raw water samples and **no** resamples of drinking water from the distribution system or plumbing indicated the presence of *E. coli* or total coliforms during that period.

The *Well Technician's Notice* can be found at [www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) under Forms or by calling the ministry's Public Information Centre at 1-800-565-4923. Submit the notice either via email to [Reg170\\_formsubmission.moe@ontario.ca](mailto:Reg170_formsubmission.moe@ontario.ca) or by fax to: 1-416-314-8716.

For a new system, the *Well Technician's Notice* can be submitted prior to start-up and then the notice of microbiological test results would not be required until the end of the month following the first anniversary of the day the system commenced operation. Installation of treatment equipment would not be required during that time.

For other options for meeting your treatment requirements, see *Treatment Options for Owners of Non-Municipal Year-Round Residential Drinking Water Systems* available at [www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) under Guidance.

### Reduced Treatment for GUDI systems

If your drinking water system is served by a well that is GUDI, it is normally considered as surface water and you are required to provide chemically assisted filtration and disinfection or equivalent treatment. However, you may be considered as having a secure well and be eligible for reduced treatment if you do not serve a designated facility and you have submitted a Well Technician's Notice to the ministry. The notice must include a statement confirming that you have complied with microbiological testing requirements according to the regulation for the past 12 months and that no raw water samples and no resamples of drinking

water from the distribution system or plumbing indicated the presence of *E. coli* or total coliforms during that period.

**Note: once you have obtained the treatment exemptions, if *E. coli* is detected in any corrective action resamples of drinking water from the distribution system or plumbing, or if total coliforms are detected on any two separate occasions within a 12 month period in any corrective action resamples of drinking water from the distribution system or plumbing, the exemption is no longer valid. You will have 90 days to install the full treatment that is required by the regulation.**

### Engineering Evaluation Report

When installing treatment equipment under this regulation, a licensed engineering practitioner with experience in sanitary engineering or a person under his or her supervision must be retained. They assess your system in order to determine the proper treatment solution that is needed for compliance with the regulation. The licensed engineering practitioner must then prepare an Engineering Evaluation Report. The report must state:

- that they, or a person under their supervision, has visited your drinking water system and
- that in the licenced engineering practitioner's opinion, all equipment needed to comply with the treatment requirements and with the operational checks is being provided.

The report must also set out the reasons for their opinion, must specify the category of the drinking water system, and must include a maintenance schedule for equipment to be inspected, tested and replaced.

**If your system does not serve a designated facility and began operating before June 1, 2003**, the *Engineering Evaluation Report* must have been completed and submitted by July 31, 2006. **If your system serves a designated facility and began operating before June 1, 2003**, the *Engineering Evaluation Report* was to have been completed on or before July 31, 2004.

**For systems that began operating on or after June 1, 2003 and altered systems:** An *Engineering Evaluation Report* must be

completed on and submitted to you within 30 days after a new system begins operation or an alteration is completed on an existing system, unless treatment exemptions apply.

You must submit written notice to the ministry within seven days of the day that the *Engineering Evaluation Report* is required using an [Engineering Evaluation Report Notice](#) available on the ministry's Drinking Water Ontario website at:

[www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) under Forms. Do not submit the actual *Engineering Evaluation Report* to the ministry, just the notice via email through [Reg170\\_formssubmission.moe@ontario.ca](mailto:Reg170_formssubmission.moe@ontario.ca) by fax, or by mail. Keep it on file and make sure it is available upon request. If you require assistance please call 1-866-793-2588 during normal business hours.

**Note:** If your system serves any designated facilities (facilities that serve people who may be more susceptible to illness from drinking water of poor quality), you may also need to submit the written notice to the interested authority for the facility, if applicable. See Schedule 21, s. 21-7 for more details on this requirement. The interested authority is usually the Ontario Government ministry to which the designated facility is responsible, e.g. the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care if it is a health care facility.

Names of some resources who may assist you in finding a licensed engineering practitioner are available at: [www.ene.gov.on.ca/publications/5677e.php](http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/publications/5677e.php).

## Step 5: Ensure maintenance and operational checks are carried out

Proper day-to-day operation of your drinking water system is the responsibility of the system owner. The following operational tasks must be performed by a “certified operator” in accordance with the regulation:

- conducts tests on-site such as chlorine residual and filter effluent turbidity
- makes all adjustments to the water treatment equipment
- examines the results of continuous monitoring equipment within 72 hours of the water samples being taken
- if disinfection equipment malfunctions, loses power or ceases to provide the appropriate level of disinfection, takes appropriate action at the location where the equipment is installed
- is promptly dispatched if alarms sound due to an equipment malfunction, loss of power or a test result that does not meet the standards established by O. Reg. 170/03
- performs regular maintenance checks on the water treatment equipment to ensure proper functioning.

For non-municipal year-round residential systems a “certified operator” is a person who holds a Class 1-4 “Water Treatment”, “Water Distribution” or “Water Distribution and Supply” certificate or who holds the applicable “Limited Subsystem” certificate issued under O. Reg. 128/04 (Certification of Drinking-Water System Operators and Water Quality Analysts).

For more information on becoming certified, contact the Ontario Water Wastewater Certification Office at: <http://www.owwco.ca> or by calling 416-231-2100 or 1-877-231-2122.

Despite these requirements, a person working under the supervision of a “certified operator” is also allowed to perform on-site chlorine residual and turbidity testing, as long as that person has been trained by the certified operator to conduct the test, and the person immediately advises the certified operator of all test results. A person holding a Water Quality Analyst certificate may also perform these tests. [Materials for training the “supervised person”](#) may be downloaded from [www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) under Guidance.

## Operational test basics

Below is a summary of the regulatory requirements related to operational tests to be carried out on the system

### Turbidity testing

- Use a turbidity meter that measures in Nephelometric Turbidity Units (NTUs).

### Monitor raw water turbidity (only required for systems that have a ground water supply)

- A turbidity sample must be taken and tested **every month** from each well from a location before the raw water enters the treatment system.

### Monitor filter effluent turbidity (only required for systems that require filtration)

- If continuous monitoring equipment is used, ensure that sampling and testing for turbidity is conducted by continuous monitoring equipment on **each** filter effluent line, and that requirements of section 6-5 of O. Reg. 170/03 have been met.
- If continuous monitoring equipment is not required and not used, ensure that a daily water sample is taken on each filter effluent line and tested for turbidity.
- The *Procedure for Disinfection of Drinking Water in Ontario*, found at [www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) lists the required frequency of turbidity testing depending on the filtration method used. Cartridge/bag filters and slow sand filtration methods allow the operator the option of monitoring turbidity on a daily basis, whereas other filtration methods are required to have continuous monitoring.

### Chlorine residual testing

- Use an electronic direct readout colourimetric or amperometric chlorine analyzer, or another device that a licensed engineering practitioner considers equivalent.
- If continuous monitoring equipment is used, ensure that requirements of section 6-5 of O. Reg. 170/03 have been met.

### Monitor primary disinfection

- If chlorination is used for primary disinfection and continuous monitoring is not used, **daily** chlorine residual tests are required at a minimum. Samples must be taken from a location where the intended contact time has just been completed.

### Monitor secondary disinfection

- If you are required to provide secondary disinfection, you must conduct **at least two samples per week** for chlorine residual in the distribution system, at least 48 hours apart. Samples must be taken from a location significantly beyond the point at which water enters the distribution system or plumbing and should be taken randomly throughout the distribution system.

## Step 6: Make required notification of adverse test results and other problems

### Adverse test results and other problems related to the drinking water system (not lead-testing samples taken from plumbing)

An adverse test result is one that is prescribed under section 16-3 of Schedule 16 of O. Reg. 170/03. This includes a result that exceeds any of the standards prescribed by Schedule 1, 2 or 3 to the Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standards, other than the standard for fluoride, if the result is from a sample of drinking water. O. Reg. 169/03 (the Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standards) can be found at [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca). Possible adverse test results or other problems and related corrective actions are summarized in the table on pages 21-22. Adverse test results and other problems related to improper disinfection are required to be reported to the authorities.

When a water sample is submitted to a licensed laboratory for testing, your laboratory will notify you if you have an adverse test result.

### What to do if you have an adverse test result other than lead

You should ensure ahead of time that contact information for the ministry's Spills Action Centre and your local medical officer of health is easily accessible to anyone who may need it.

#### First: Make an immediate report (by telephone or in person)

Immediately report the adverse test result or other problem to:

- your local medical officer of health at the local public health unit, by speaking with someone in person or on the telephone. Contact information for your local public health units can be found in your blue pages or at: [www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca) and

As soon as you become aware of an adverse test result, either from your licensed laboratory or from a test result of a sample taken on-site, or if you observe that your drinking water system is directing water to users that has not been disinfected in accordance with the ministry's *Procedure for Disinfection of Drinking Water in Ontario*, found at [www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) you are required to immediately contact your local medical officer of health AND the ministry's Spills Action Centre (SAC). See Schedule 16, s.16-3 of O. Reg. 170/03 for more details.

- the ministry's Spills Action Centre (telephone 1-800-268-6060); the Spills Action Centre is open 24 hours/day and 365 days/year
- the operator of each designated facility served by your system, if any designated facilities are served by your system, by speaking with someone in person or on the telephone, unless the operator of the designated facility is also the owner of the drinking water system.

#### Second: Deliver written notice

Within 24 hours of giving the verbal notice, you must deliver written notice to:

- the local medical officer of health by fax or in person
- the ministry's Spills Action Centre by fax at 1-800-268-6061
- the operator of any designated facilities served by your system by fax or in person and
- the interested authority for any designated facilities (if applicable) by fax.

Use the *Notice of Adverse Test Results and Other Problems* available at:

[www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) under Forms.

### Third: Deliver follow-up notice of corrective action taken

Once you have resolved the issue that gave rise to the adverse test result or other problem, you must submit a *Notice of Issue Resolution* available at [www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) under Forms within seven days of resolution.

The follow-up written notice must summarize the action taken and the results achieved.

- Send the notice to the local medical officer of health, and the ministry's Spills Action Centre within seven days of resolving the issue.
- Send the notice to the interested authority for any designated facility (if applicable) within 30 days.

### Exceedances of lead in plumbing samples

When a laboratory finds an exceedance of lead or other chemical standards in a sample of water taken from **plumbing** for lead testing in accordance with the requirements of Schedule 15.1, the notification requirements are as follows:

- The **laboratory** doing the analysis is required to provide a written report (delivered in person, by fax or email) within 24 hours to the:
  - local medical officer of health
  - ministry's Spills Action Centre
  - drinking water system **owner** or operating authority and
  - interested authority in the case of a designated facility.
- The drinking water system **owner** must give to the local medical officer of health a copy of the report received from the laboratory within 24 hours of receiving the report.
- You must report all adverse results during and outside of the "winter" and "summer" sampling periods, as long as they are part of your community sampling and were taken in accordance with the regulation.
- The drinking water system **owner** or **operating authority** is also required to give to the occupant of the premises where plumbing samples were taken a copy of all test results received from the laboratory within seven days of receiving the results from the laboratory. This should include

an indication of whether the results exceed any standard in Schedule 2 of the Ontario Drinking-Water Quality Standards (O. Reg. 169/03). It should also include advice given by the public health inspector to the owner/operator about what steps the occupant should take to address any exceedances and a telephone number for enquires about the report. Within seven days the system owner or operating authority must also report exceedances to owners of multi-residential buildings where the sample was taken from a unit in the building.

**Note:** if you have adverse test results for lead from distribution system samples, see the previous section about adverse result notification.

### Step 7: Take corrective action if required

If you are required to report an adverse test result or other problem, not only must you notify the appropriate authorities as stated above, but you must also follow corrective actions to resolve the problem and protect the people who are using your water.

You must follow the proper set of corrective actions following the specified adverse result or problem (refer to the chart beginning on the next page).

You can also contact your local Ministry of the Environment office for further advice on any adverse test results. Visit: [www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) for contact information.

If any of the results for samples of water taken from plumbing exceed lead or any drinking water standard, the local medical officer of health will direct steps to be taken by owners and operators in order to address lead exceedances in plumbing. These steps must be followed if directed by the local medical officer of health, and may include providing additional information to occupants of the affected premises so that they know the appropriate actions to take to reduce any potential health risks.

## What corrective actions must you take following adverse test results or other problems? (See schedule 18 of O. Reg. 170/03 for more information)

**For systems not currently using chlorine,** following any adverse microbiological test results take the corrective action as outlined in the ministry's *Procedure for Corrective Action for Systems Not Currently Using Chlorine* available at: [www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater).

**For systems providing chloramination,** please refer to O. Reg. 170/03, sections 18-4 to 18-9 for further details on specific corrective actions to be taken.

### IN ALL CASES, YOU MUST CONSULT WITH THE LOCAL MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH AND TAKE ANY ADDITIONAL STEPS THAT ARE DIRECTED

Adverse test result or other problem	First step	Second step	Third step
Water not disinfected properly is directed to users	Immediately restore the disinfection, if possible, before notifying users.	Immediately take all reasonable steps to notify users to use an alternate source of drinking water or, if no alternate source is available, to bring water to a rapid boil for at least one minute before use.	
If filtration is required, the turbidity in filter effluent is more than 1.0 NTU	Immediately check the turbidity monitoring equipment and correct any problems identified. If no problems are identified, immediately backwash the nearest filter upstream of the sample location or immediately replace the filter cartridges or filter elements of the nearest filtration equipment upstream of that location, and immediately review other upstream operational processes and correct any faulty processes identified.	Immediately after the first step, resample and test. If resample confirms exceedance, immediately take all reasonable steps to notify users to use an alternate source of drinking water or, if no alternate source is available, to bring water to a rapid boil for at least one minute before use.	Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for servicing the filtration equipment upstream of the location, and flush the distribution system and plumbing.
If secondary disinfection is required, free chlorine residual is less than 0.05 mg/L	Immediately flush the distribution system and any plumbing, and restore secondary disinfection to ensure a free chlorine residual level of at least 0.05 mg/L is quickly achieved at all points in the affected parts of the distribution system and plumbing.	If 0.05 mg/L of free chlorine residual cannot be quickly achieved at all points in the affected parts, immediately take all reasonable steps to notify users to use an alternate source of drinking water or, if no alternate source is available, to bring water to a rapid boil for at least one minute before use.	

Continued on next page

Adverse test result or other problem	First step	Second step	Third step
<i>E. coli</i> are detected in a test result from a drinking water sample.	Immediately take all reasonable steps to notify users to use an alternate source of drinking water or, if no alternate source is available, to bring water to a rapid boil for at least one minute before use.	Immediately resample and test (see Note below).  Immediately increase the chlorine dose and flush the distribution system and plumbing to ensure that a free chlorine residual of at least 0.2 mg/L is achieved at all points in the affected parts of the distribution system and plumbing.	Maintain the chlorine residual concentration in the affected parts of the system and continue to resample and test until <i>E. coli</i> is no longer detected in two consecutive sets of samples taken 24 to 48 hours apart.
Total coliforms are detected in a test result from a drinking water sample	Resample and test as soon as reasonably possible (see Note below).	If resample confirms total coliforms, immediately increase the chlorine dose and flush the distribution system and plumbing to ensure that a free chlorine residual of at least 0.2 mg/L is achieved at all points in the affected parts of the distribution system and plumbing.	Maintain the chlorine residual concentration in the affected parts of the system and continue to resample and test until total coliforms are no longer detected in two consecutive sets of samples taken 24 to 48 hours apart.
Exceedance of a chemical or radiological parameter listed in Schedule 2 or 3 of the Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 169/03)	In samples taken from plumbing as part of the community lead testing program, follow instructions from local medical officer of health.  Otherwise, resample and test as soon as reasonably possible (see Note below).	If resample confirms exceedance, consult with local medical officer of health on further actions.	
Sodium concentration that exceeds 20 mg/L and a report has not been made in the previous 60 months	Resample and test as soon as reasonably possible (see Note below).	If resample confirms exceedance, consult with local medical officer of health on further actions.	

**Note:** To “resample and test” for a microbiological parameter, it means that you must immediately collect and transport a set of at least three drinking water samples for the parameter which caused the adverse test result to your licensed laboratory for analysis. The first sample must be from the same location as the sample that gave rise to the corrective action. The second sample must be from a location that is a significant distance upstream from the location of the adverse result, where reasonably possible, and the third sample must be from a

location that is a significant distance downstream from the adverse result, where reasonably possible.

Unless it is a test conducted on-site, to “resample and test” for a parameter that is **not** a microbiological parameter, it means that you must collect and transport a water sample for the parameter which caused the adverse water quality from the same location as the sample that gave rise to the corrective action to your licensed laboratory for analysis.

## Step 8: Post warning notices of potential problems whenever required

You must post an approved Ministry of the Environment-issued warning notice to advise the public if:

- following adverse test results or other problems you are required to notify users to use an alternate source of drinking water or, if no alternate source is available, to bring water to a rapid boil for at least one minute before use or
- you are not currently meeting your sampling requirements or
- you have not yet carried out required corrective actions.

### Where to obtain official warning notices

Warning notices must be in a form provided by or approved by the ministry. There are two types of warning notices available from the Ministry of the Environment. Ensure with ministry staff that the proper notice is used.

You can obtain Ministry of the Environment-approved warning notices by calling 1-800-565-4923.

If you have not yet obtained warning notices, you can (as an interim measure) post any sign that states: “Public Notice: Do not drink this water” until you have received the ministry-approved warning notices.

### Where to post warning notices

- Warning notices must be posted in prominent locations where they are likely to be seen by those using water from the system.
- If the system serves any designated facilities, warning notices must also be posted at every entrance to every building or structure that is part of a designated facility.
- If you are the owner of the drinking water system but do not own a designated facility served by your system, you do not have to post notices in the designated facility as above, but you must ensure that the operator of the facility is provided with:
  - sufficient copies of the warning notices and
  - instructions to post the warning notices as above.
- If you fail to post a warning notice at your drinking water system, a provincial officer, public health inspector, or agent of the interested authority (if applicable) may do so instead.

**Warning Notices DO NOT provide an exemption from testing or corrective action!** The warning notices required to be posted are a temporary requirement meant to protect users of the system in the short term. The owner must still comply with testing and corrective action requirements as soon as possible, despite posting the warning notices.

## Step 9: Prepare an annual report and retain records

All drinking water systems subject to the Drinking Water Systems Regulation must prepare an annual report each year. A copy of each report must be kept on-site. If your system serves any designated facilities then a copy must also be given to each designated facility served by the system and, if applicable, to each interested authority.

Your annual report must cover the period from January 1 to December 31 in a given year. It must be prepared by February 28 of the following year. You can either use the Annual Report template available on the ministry's Drinking Water Ontario website at: [www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) under Forms or create your own template. The annual report must include:

- a description of the drinking water system
- a summary of any adverse test notices or observations of inadequately disinfected water being directed to system users
- a summary of all tests and their results
- a summary of any corrective actions undertaken and
- a description of any major expenses for the system.

Keep copies of all the test results from your required samples, every order that applies to the system, and your *Engineering Evaluation Report* (in addition to your annual report) on-site. You must make them available during normal business hours to the public upon request for a period of two years, free of charge. You must also have a copy of O. Reg. 170/03 available to the public.

Records and reports must be kept for certain time periods for review by a ministry inspector and any licensed engineering practitioner, or hydrogeologist preparing an opinion, report or assessment regarding your system for the purposes identified in O. Reg. 170/03.

- Keep the following for at least two years:
  - operational test results
  - microbiological test results and
  - records of maintenance checks and activities.
- Keep the following for at least six years:
  - trihalomethane, nitrate and nitrite test results and
  - any chemical testing required to be sampled and tested every three months
  - lead test results
  - annual reports.
- Keep the following for at least 15 years:
  - sodium and fluoride test results
  - any other chemical or radiological, pesticide, and health-related parameter test results
  - engineering evaluation reports
  - inorganic and organic chemical test results.

## E: Who can I contact for more information?

- If you would like other guides and fact sheets related to drinking water, please visit the ministry's [Drinking Water Ontario](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) website at [www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater) or contact the Public Information Centre at [picemail.moe@ontario.ca](mailto:picemail.moe@ontario.ca) or 1-800-565-4923 / 416-325-4000.
- You can also sign up for drinking water updates by sending an email to: [drinking.water@ontario.ca](mailto:drinking.water@ontario.ca) and requesting that you be added to the mailing list.







