



Fact Sheet

Sanitary Surveys of Public Water Systems

A sanitary survey is an inspection of the water system facilities, operations, and records to assess and identify conditions that may present a sanitary or public health risk. In Washington state, all Group A public drinking water systems must have a routine sanitary survey once every three to five years.

A surveyor from our office, a local health jurisdiction, or a contract surveyor will conduct your sanitary survey. They will contact you when it's due and arrange a mutually agreeable date for the survey.

When you get your survey date, be sure to:

- Gather, review, and organize records** to share with the surveyor (water facility inventory, water quality results, maintenance records, planning documents, and so on).
- Arrange for water system personnel most knowledgeable about the system operation and management to be available during the survey.** We want your sanitary survey to be successful. This guidance will help you prepare and avoid significant deficiencies.

Water systems that don't schedule a survey will receive another notice with a deadline. Failure to comply will result in progressive enforcement:

- Increased coliform monitoring to five samples per month.
- State significant non-complier status.
- A red operating permit and civil penalties.

Fees

If a surveyor from our office or a local health jurisdiction without a local fee conducts your sanitary survey, you will receive your bill with your final inspection report. If a local health jurisdiction with a local fee conducts your survey, you may be required to pay the fee before scheduling the survey.

Before the sanitary survey

- Inventory all structures, man-made materials, and land use within 100 feet of any well and 200 feet of any spring.** Identify all microbial and chemical contaminant threats. Prepare a plan to eliminate or mitigate them. Discuss your plan and provide a copy to the surveyor during the survey. See [Sanitary Control Area Protection](#) (331-453).*

8 elements of all routine sanitary surveys

1. Planning and management documents
2. Distribution system and status of cross-connection control program
3. Source and sanitary control area
4. Source pumps and pumping facilities
5. Source treatment procedures and equipment
6. Pressure tanks
7. Finished water storage
8. Operator certification status



HELPING TO ENSURE SAFE AND RELIABLE DRINKING WATER

- ❑ **Inspect your well or spring source facilities.** Verify the integrity of seals and screens used to keep contaminants out of the well casing or spring box. See [Simple Fixes for Wellhead Openings](#) (331-232).*
- ❑ **Physically disconnect your emergency source** unless it meets all of the following conditions:
 - Drilled well with casing.
 - Identified in a department-approved emergency response plan.
 - Isolated from the water system by a closed valve and the motor starter is electrically locked-out and tagged-out in the off position.
- ❑ **Inspect your reservoir facilities.** Verify the roof hatch, vent, and roof structure are weatherproof. Verify the integrity of the screens installed over the vent and overflow outlet.
- ❑ Provide current photographs (less than one year old) of the parts of your water system the surveyor may not be able to access. For example, photograph the reservoir roof or overflow that must be climbed. Photographs should verify all storage tank roof vents, hatches, overflows, drains and openings where the level gauge wire enters each tank are sealed or properly screened to keep contaminants out.
- ❑ Your storage tank overflow pipe outlet should be built with an approved air gap and screen.
- ❑ A raw source water sample tap should be on each source.
- ❑ Each well house, pump station, and storage tank should be secure from unauthorized access.
- ❑ Animals should not be able enter your buildings.
- ❑ The outlet pipe for any pump control valve or vacuum relief valve should have an approved air gap and screen.
- ❑ Water treatment chemicals should be NSF-approved for use in potable water. Any hard-piped water supply into the chemical solution tank should be built with an air gap or equipped with an approved reduced pressure backflow assembly.

*Our publications are online at <https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/eh/dw/publications>

During and after your sanitary survey

- Water system personnel meet with the surveyor to discuss records and provide a tour of the water system facilities, pump house, treatment unit, storage, booster pumps, distribution system, and so on.
- After the survey, the surveyor sends you a completed survey letter and report of findings. Be sure to read the report carefully. It describes any deficiencies found during the inspection and the associated corrective action you must take.
- You must address significant deficiencies and significant findings by the assigned due date. Please review any observations and recommendations noted in the survey report.
- You must notify us as outlined in the survey report when you complete the necessary corrections. If unable to make the corrections by the due date, you must submit a corrective action plan with a timeline indicating when items will be corrected. We track any significant deficiencies and significant findings assigned a due date until you correct them.
- Keep a copy of the survey results and all other survey-related follow-up documentation and correspondence (including your own) for your records.
- Don't wait for the next sanitary survey: Make self-inspections of source and storage tank vents, covers, seals, and screens part of your routine operations and maintenance program.

For more information

Eastern Region, Spokane Valley: 509-329-2100

Northwest Region, Kent: 253-395-6750

Southwest Region, Tumwater: 360-236-3030

