

Public notification helps to protect public health

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Water systems must deliver safe and reliable drinking water to their customers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If the drinking water supply becomes contaminated, many people could get seriously ill or die. Therefore, state and federal laws require water systems to notify their customers any time a problem with drinking water poses a health risk.

Our highest priority is responding to drinking water emergencies. We work hand-in-hand with water systems to resolve problems. Notifying water system customers when their water may not be safe to drink, gives them time to protect themselves and their families.

Public notification rule

Public notification requirements help ensure customers know—as soon as possible—if a situation poses a public health risk. This rule applies to all Group A public water systems. Group A water systems serve 15 or more service connections or 25 or more people per day for 60 or more days per year.

Group A public water systems must notify their customers whenever they:

- Violate drinking water quality or monitoring requirements.
- Operate under a variance or exemption.
- Have any situation that poses a public health risk, such as a disruption in service.
- Receive an order from the Office of Drinking Water (ODW).
- Fail to comply with an ODW order.
- Receive a red operating permit.

Public notification requirements also give water systems an opportunity to educate their customers about drinking water quality and build trust by sharing information openly. Notices used in this positive way can help customers understand the basis for rate increases necessary for additional drinking water treatment and protection.

Public notification timing and distribution requirements

Notifying customers in a timely manner about actual or potential threats related to their drinking water allows them to make informed decisions affecting their health. Public notification timing and distribution requirements depend on the level of threat associated with the violation or event.

Tier 1: Acute health concerns require notification within 24 hours.

Tier 2: Chronic health concerns require notification within 30 days.

Tier 3: Reporting and monitoring violations require notification within 365 days.

You must send us a copy of all public notifications and the appropriate public notice certification.



Other aspects of the public notification rule

Water systems may combine notices for individual violations into their annual Consumer Confidence Reports, as long as they meet the public notification timing requirements.

This rule, including the following, is in the publication *Group A Public Water Supplies: Chapter 246-290 WAC (331-010)**. See Part 7, Reporting, Subpart A.

- A list of violations and situations that require 24-hour notification.
- Simplified health effects language.
- Standard language for monitoring violations.

Technical assistance

You can access public notification forms at

http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/forms/forms.htm#Public_Notification

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

We also provide links to the following U.S. Environmental Protection Agency publications:

- *Public Notification Handbook* (816-R-09-013), March 2010.
- *Public Notification Handbook for Transient Noncommunity Water Systems* (816-R-09-009), March 2010.

You can call our regional offices for technical assistance.

We are open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you have an after-hours emergency, call (877) 481-4901.

Eastern Region, Spokane Valley (509) 329-2100

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More detailed contact information is online at

http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/Staff_Lists/dwnames.htm