



Jan. 2017
DOH 331-438

Fact Sheet

Service Area Policies

A water system’s service area is the specific area or areas the system serves or plans to serve. This may include the:

- Retail service area (applies to municipal water suppliers only)
- Future service area
- Areas where the system provides water to other public water systems

Water systems should document how they will serve these areas in their service area policies and include the policies in their water system plan.

Service area policies

Service area policies should define provisions for new service and include associated timeframes so applicants know what to expect. Having clear and complete service area policies documented in the system’s water system plan will help avoid potential disputes about new service. For example, explain how new requests for service will be processed and identify potential costs applicants may incur. Outline your appeal process upfront for any service conditions you impose or for denials of service, and explain whether you offer direct service only or if you will consider remote service.

Consider the following when developing your service area policies:

- General facility charges
- Possibility for cost recovery through late-comer agreements
- Surcharges for areas outside a corporate boundary
- Cost for up-sizing facilities
- Meter specifications and material charges
- Applicable design and performance standards
- Differences between service inside or outside a corporate boundary or urban growth area
- Developer extension and main extension requirements
- Wholesaling water
- Wheeling water
- Cross-connection control devices and requirements for inspecting and testing
- Procedures for granting or requesting project time extensions
- Guiding principles such as “first-come, first served”
- Annexation



HELPING TO ENSURE SAFE AND RELIABLE DRINKING WATER

Conditions of service

Conditions of service are specific requirements that help you implement your service area policies.

Consider the following when developing your conditions of service:

- System and applicant responsibilities for new service requests.
- Customer consent for inspection, maintenance, and standard repair activities that may disrupt water service.
- Whether professional engineer review is required for new system facilities to accommodate new development.

Other considerations

- Water systems located in a critical water supply service area should refer to the “timely and reasonable” framework outlined in their local Coordinated Water System Plan.
- Municipal water suppliers should provide a narrative about the “duty to serve” and summarize how they will evaluate whether they can provide service for new requests. The evaluation should discuss the system’s capacity, including any non-technical conditions that may affect its ability to provide new water service (such as annexation procedures, water right limitations, or applicable local ordinances).

For more information

Call the nearest Office of Drinking Water Regional Offices:

Eastern Region: Spokane Valley 509-329-2100

Northwest Region: Kent 253-395-6750

Southwest Region: Tumwater 360-236-3030

View our fact sheets on other planning-related topics at:

<https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/eh/dw/publications/publications.cfm?action=pubindex&id=14&type=subject&CFID=1135560&CFToken=78228055>

