

Safe Drinking Water: Manitoba Acts and Regulations

What law covers the safety of drinking water in Manitoba?

The Drinking Water Safety Act (2002) outlines the steps that people who supply drinking water to the public (water suppliers) must take to ensure that water is safe to drink. Manitoba Conservation and Climate's Office of Drinking Water enforces The Drinking Water Safety Act. The provincial act states that all water suppliers must:

- be licensed by the Office of Drinking Water
- follow water quality monitoring procedures and record keeping requirements
- meet drinking water quality standards
- make test results and other important information available to the public
- get approval from the Office of Drinking Water for new construction or changes to their treatment process
- conduct a periodic assessment of their water system infrastructure and water source

What are the regulations under The Drinking Water Safety Act?

There are two regulations under The Drinking Water Safety Act:

- The Drinking Water Quality Standards Regulation (2007) sets legally enforceable standards based on the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality. The guidelines are set by the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Committee on Drinking Water chaired by Health Canada. The provincial regulation adopts a subset of health-based guidelines that have potential to affect Manitoba water supplies.
- The Drinking Water Safety Regulation (2007) provides direction on disinfection, water quality testing, record keeping and public reporting requirements. It also provides details on the processes for licencing, construction approvals and assessments.

How does the Office of Drinking Water monitor water suppliers?

The water supplier's operating licence outlines the water testing requirements and water quality standards that apply to their system.

Other requirements include disinfection system monitoring, turbidity monitoring to confirm the filters are working properly, and reporting requirements. Operators must contact the regional Drinking Water Officer immediately in an emergency or under any conditions where the water may be unsafe. The regional Drinking Water Officer will talk to a Medical Officer of Health to decide if a boil water advisory is needed to protect public health.

How can I find out more about my water supply and water quality test results?

Water suppliers must keep records of their operating licence, construction approvals, water quality test results and any orders or advisories issued to their system, and must make these records available to the public on request.

Water suppliers who serve more than 1,000 people must provide an annual report on their operations to the Office of Drinking Water before March 31 each year, and must post that report on the Internet. These annual reports include details about the water system, water quality test results, major expenses, any problems meeting regulations and actions taken to fix those problems.

What happens if the water supply does not meet the water quality standards?

Water suppliers who do not meet the quality standards may be asked to provide the Office of Drinking Water with a compliance plan describing how they will meet the standards. Options include changing water sources, connecting to a nearby water system or upgrading the water treatment process.

What are water supply infrastructure and water source assessments?

An assessment involves a source-to-tap review of a water supply to assess the condition of its infrastructure and equipment, and its ability to meet provincial standards and industry best practices. The assessment identifies ways to improve the water supply's safety and reliability. Assessments are completed by an engineer, a qualified person or by the water supplier depending on the water supply's source, size and water quality. Assessments are typically required every five years. Information generated from an assessment can help the water supplier budget and plan for making improvements.

Do operators have to be certified to run a water supply system?

Water treatment plant operators are regulated by Manitoba Conservation and Climate's Environmental Approval Branch under The Environment Act (1987). The Water and Wastewater Facility Operators Regulation (2003) sets the standards for classification of water treatment and distribution systems, and certification of operators. The Office of Drinking Water Branch works with the Environmental Approvals Branch to classify the facilities, support the development of training programs, and ensure operators are qualified to manage the systems they are responsible for.

What is the province's source-to tap approach to water quality?

Manitoba also helps to protect drinking water at its source using The Water Protection Act (2005). Under this Act, watershed management plans are developed with prioritized actions to protect water, aquatic ecosystems and drinking water sources. Together, The Water Protection Act and The Drinking Water Safety Act, provide a framework for protecting water systems from the source, through the treatment and distribution system to the consumer's tap.

Where can I get more information?

For a copy of the Drinking Water Safety Act, regulations under the act, or information on Manitoba's Drinking Water Program, contact the Office of Drinking Branch at 204-945-5762, ODW@gov.mb.ca or visit the website at www.manitoba.ca/drinkingwater to find a local office near you.

For a copy of the Water and Wastewater Facility Operators Regulation or information on operator certification, contact the Environmental Approvals Branch at 204-945-7065, wwopcert@gov.mb.ca or visit the website at www.manitoba.ca/sd/waste_management/wastewater/wastewater_certification_program