



COWLITZ COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Volume 3

THE WATER FLOWS

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Water Sample Prices



Cowlitz County Group B Water Systems who submit Coliform Bacteria or Nitrate samples to the Cowlitz County Health

Department in 2009 will be able to get the sample done **at cost** pricing:

Bacteria: \$28.00

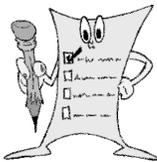
Nitrate: \$20.00

Arsenic: \$25.00

Customer Survey

We appreciate your input and comments. We would like to thank you in advance for taking the time to complete

and return the enclosed customer survey. Please return it however is most convenient for you by mail, fax 360-425-7531 or email [Melissa at Hiltsm@co.cowlitz.wa.us](mailto:Hiltsm@co.cowlitz.wa.us).



Water Samples required for Group B water systems are as follows:

Bacteria—Annually Nitrate—Every Three Years

Group B Rule Revision Website

The Washington State Department of Health is currently in the process to revising the Group B regulations. In September 2008 the Department of Health held five public forums around the state to get public comments for proposed rule changes.

The comments from the public forums are available on a Group B website dedicated to the Group B rule revision. The web address for this site is located at the bottom of this article.

The following is a summary of what is currently available on the website:

- A copy of the presentation given at the public forums
- A discussion paper about reasons for updating the regulations and some possible changes
- A link to join the Group B listserv that provides updates and meeting information
- A timeline for the proposed rule development

The current timeline proposes draft rule language sent available stakeholders and interested parties in the Spring of 2009 and a rule effective date in the Summer of 2010. A summary of the proposed changes discussed in the paper and presentation given at the public forums is available in the Proposed Changes to Group B Regulations article in this newsletter. <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/groupb.htm>

Cowlitz County Arsenic Information



Eleven percent of Group B water systems in Cowlitz County have had water samples for arsenic that have tested above the new EPA limit for arsenic which is 10ppb. Existing Group B Regulations require that arsenic levels be at 50 ppb or less; however the current rule revision may change the standard for Group B systems to be consistent with the federal EPA requirements.

It is recommended that systems currently above the 10ppb level established by the EPA at least notify all the users of the system about the arsenic level in the water system. If the new regulations reduce the arsenic MCL from 50 ppb to 10ppb for group B's, then additional actions may be needed for those systems with elevated arsenic.

Handouts about arsenic and its health effects are available on our website or in our office. If you are unsure about arsenic levels in your water system please feel free to call the Health Department for any information we may have on the testing history of the water system.

In addition to the eleven percent of systems with arsenic above the EPA limit, another eighteen percent of water systems have never had an arsenic sample taken on the water system. For those systems that have never had an arsenic sample it is recommended that an arsenic sample be taken either as a single sample or as part of the required complete Inorganic Chemical Test to verify levels of arsenic in your well water.



Water System Security

This last spring a public water system in Cowlitz County was broken into, vandalized and the well intentionally contaminated with a petroleum product.

Due to the contamination, users of the system were using portable showers, toilets and sinks for approximately a month. Water had to be trucked in as needed to fill rented storage tanks that supplied the portable sinks and showers.

Cost of the cleanup, testing, and other expenses associated with the vandalism exceeded \$100,000. Since the incident this water system has installed additional security measures at the facility as part of a grant it received to help cover the expense of recovery.

This incident highlights the substantial impact of contamination or vandalism on a water system and might give you an opportunity to review your own system.

- Are the wellhead(s) and other water system equipment in locked structures?
- Are water storage tanks secure and locked?
- Are keys to the water system kept in a secure location?
- Do you routinely check the wellhead(s) and structures for anything unusual?
- How would you respond to a similar situation?
- How do you respond to complaints about odor or taste?



Security is an important element of managing a water system and should be taken seriously. Please think about how secure your water system and ways to improve the security of your facility.

Water System Approval Status

A program goal for 2009 is to provide all systems using wells that are currently considered unapproved water systems information on what will be required of the system to gain approval status.

Unapproved water systems are those that have never gone through a formal review process with the Health Department and received approval during that process. Also, some systems may have been approved at one time but are no longer considered approved due to major changes made to the water system without approval.

Residents on unapproved water systems may have building permits or loans denied. Building permits and loans may also be denied for non-compliance with ongoing requirements of Group B Public Water Systems.

If you have questions regarding the approval status of your water system, please contact the health department for more information.

Possible Changes to Group B Regulations

A presentation given by DOH at several public forums regarding revision to the Group B regulations listed some possible changes that are being considered. The following are some of the possible changes that are being considered. Please note this list is not all inclusive nor are they finalized.

Group B Design Manual Changes

The guidelines for developing new Group B Systems are being revised

- Water use standards set at 800 gallons per residence per day (no real change)
- Clarify which systems need a licensed professional engineer to design the water system
- No approval of new systems that are considered "High Public Health Risk" (see below for definition)

Possible Group B Regulation Changes

High Public Health Risk

- Focusing compliance efforts on systems with "High Public Health Risks"
- "High Public Health Risk" sources include surface water, springs, dug wells, or contamination with coliform, nitrate, arsenic

Water Quality Monitoring

- Yearly reminders for water quality sampling sent by DOH
- Make water quality data available to local permitting authorities and lending institutions
- Creating an online portal for easy updates to the Water Facilities Inventory Form

Communication and Education

- Require systems to notify customers within 24 hours after any contamination (current regulations allow 14 days for notification unless otherwise directed by the health department)
- DOH to develop additional educational materials for local health agencies to provide to Group B Water Systems and individual well owners

Additional Proposals

- Reduce arsenic level from 50ppb to 10ppb
- Different requirements for different sized systems
 - ◊ Additional compliance requirements for larger Group B systems
 - ◊ Less compliance requirements for smaller Group B systems

If you would like more detailed information about the Group B revision process or would like contact information for making your voice heard regarding the process then please see the Group B revision website at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/groupb.htm>.